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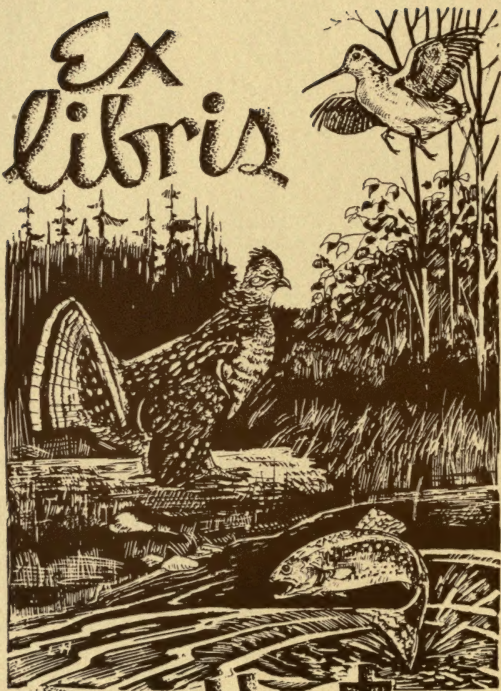
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Don Horter

The Book
OF THE
All-Round Angler.

A COMPREHENSIVE TREATISE ON
ANGLING IN BOTH FRESH AND SALT WATER.

BY
JOHN BICKERDYKE, *second.*
Charles Henry Cook

WITH OVER 150 ENGRAVINGS.

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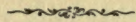
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PREFACE.



THE information given in the following pages is based, for the most part, on experience. Very few of the methods described have not been carefully tried by me at some time or another. When I have had to borrow from the works of other writers I have duly acknowledged my indebtedness. I must take this opportunity to thank several friends—specialists, I may term them, in various branches of angling—for giving me the benefit of their criticisms. I am particularly indebted to Mr. William Senior, Angling Editor of *The Field*, for the introductory pages, which contain a graphic description of the delights attending the favourite pastime of an all-round fisherman.

This is, I believe, the only book which contains an account of all, or nearly all, the known methods, old and new, of catching fresh and salt-water fish with rod and line. Wittingly I have omitted none. Of course, with so many branches of angling to describe, none can be very exhaustively considered. At the same time, I have treated pike-fishing and bottom-fishing as fully as has yet been done; while Division IV. contains information on angling in salt water* far in excess of anything hitherto published. Fly-fishing has been brought

* This has been also published separately, under the title, "Angling in Salt Water."

to such a pitch of perfection, and is such a large subject, that it is impossible for me to do it quite the justice I could wish; but I am in hopes that I shall set my would-be trout and salmon-fishing readers in the right path, and that, with the hints given them, added to certain experiences which they must obtain for themselves, they will meet with such success as their endeavours merit. I would recommend those who wish to dive deeper into the mysteries of the art of fly-fishing to read Francis Francis' "Book on Angling" (Chapters IX. to XIII.), Halford's beautiful work on "Floating Flies," Pritt's "North-Country Flies" and "Book of the Grayling," Major Traherne on Salmon Fishing (in the Badminton Library), Theakston's "British Angling Flies," and—— but that is enough to begin upon.

Some of the engravings of tackle, and a few items of information, are given more than once. This is necessitated by the fact that each Division has to be complete in itself, being published separately for the benefit of those anglers who do not require or cannot afford the whole work. Any repetition there may be is certainly inconsiderable, and should be rather a convenience to the reader than otherwise.

Angling is a progressive art, rendered so by the rapidly-increasing cunning of fish. From time to time fresh devices and expedients have to be invented to enable us to fill our creels, and however frequently works on angling are published, we may always look for something novel in them. It is now some years since the last work on fishing generally was written, and angling has made such advances in the meantime, especially as regards tackle, that I hope this volume will be found to contain much that is fresh.

My ideal of a text-book on angling, cock-fighting, mangling, or any other subject, is a work which omits no necessary information, contains no technical terms without an explanation of them, and enables a person who is entirely ignorant

of the subject to understand it—in short, one which presupposes no knowledge on the part of the reader. It should also, in my opinion, be free from crotchets, for a crotchet is a fixed idea which arises from lack of experience. The crotchety angler is usually right so far as his own stream is concerned, and in forcing his ideas upon us he forgets or is ignorant of the fact that streams, like opinions, differ. I well remember once puzzling over the word “tag” in the description of a salmon-fly. In the work in which it occurred no explanation was given, and on consulting two others, I found in one the tag described as the tail, in the other as the portion of the body next the tail. This sort of thing is maddening to beginners, and I hope I have been guilty of few such offences. I am not the right person to say whether or no I have attained my ideal, but my work has been a true labour of love, and, in the words of a certain careless Irish fisherman whom I once had the misfortune to employ: “I’ve done me besht, and what can a man do more?”

JOHN BICKERDYKE.

INTRODUCTION.



THE "All-round Angler," after all, may be said to represent the masses of the brotherhood. What there is in the delightful sport of angling that is simple, economical, and universal, is most decidedly his. Old father Izaak was in a pre-eminent degree an all-round angler; while his friend Cotton was, perhaps, more of a specialist, devoted rather to the crystal streams of the Derbyshire dales, and their trout and grayling, than to the meadows of the Lea, along which the tuneful milkmaid came to tend her kine. In these days of improved railway and steamboat communication, of developed angling literature, and of multiplying angling associations, the specialists increase, no doubt, in a fair ratio; and it is no uncommon thing to meet with sportsmen who boast that they have never used any but a fly-rod, and have not deemed it worthy of themselves to descend to any fish but the *salmonidæ*, which, by common consent (though with somewhat of a stretch of meaning), we, in these days, term the game fishes *par excellence*. This exclusiveness is often a matter of early training.

But, alas! it does not fall to the lot of every man to be born on the banks of a salmon-river or trout-stream, and to be able to learn the rudiments of the art by practising upon the aristocracy of the waters. Had it happened to all of us to kill salmon with a fly before we were out of round jackets, we too might nourish a bias in favour of such lordly species, and resolve that, so far as in us lay, we would not stoop to meaner game. But

such was not the lot of the majority of the anglers of Great Britain. We had perforce to make the most of our chances, catch gudgeon, perch, or roach, for want of better, and look upon the big pike or lusty trout as legitimate objects of ambition.

Nor is it too much to say that the all-round angler can very well afford to smile at the conceit of those who do not follow him in his modest practices. He gets the lion's share of rural delights, for his is, more truly than can be the case with the salmon or trout-fisher, the contemplative man's recreation. All this has been expressed again and again in poetry and prose, and Dendy Sadler, by his charming angling pictures, ever keeps the idea foremost. The seat by the river bank on a summer evening, when the swallows dart and the song-birds are in high chorus, what time the lowing herds come down to the ford to drink, and the labourers file slowly across the plank bridge on their way to the cottage, from whose chimney the thin blue smoke ascends straight into the clear air—this is a veritable throne of state in the palace of Nature. The angler may wait a long while before the well-watched float disappears beneath the surface, but he can possess his soul in patience under such circumstances. The situation is one of complete restfulness, of innocent and beautiful surroundings; and patience becomes an easy virtue when all the senses are lulled by the sights and sounds of water, wood, and field.

The all-round angler, however, is not debarred from the exercise of the highest branches of the sport. The mere bottom fisher, who does not spin for pike, or cast fly for salmon, trout, or grayling, is not an all-round angler in the true meaning of the phrase. Here, as in other matters, the greater includes the lesser, and the true sportsman is he who can settle down with equal zeal and enjoyment to the luring of the gudgeon from the raked-up gravel of the ordinary coarse-fish stream

of the shires, or to the killing of a chalk-stream trout upon the tiniest floating fly. All, literally, is fish that comes to the all-round angler's net; and in the term we must, of course, always rank the angler for sea-fish, as described in our good friend John Bickerdyke's practical treatise upon that hitherto neglected branch of all-round angling.

One wonders occasionally how it is that so many books are written upon angling; one asks whether they are read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested. The explanation is probably to be found in the increasing difficulty of the art of angling. You will sometimes meet men who laugh to scorn the notion that fish are becoming educated. Education may not, perhaps, be precisely the word to use in such a case, but we are bound to face the fact that every year fish not only seem to be, but really are, harder to catch. The angler, nowadays, has to use all his skill to be successful, and thus, every hint that is put into honest type, every new theory broached, every fresh device invented, will be eagerly considered by him. Any honestly serviceable work upon the subject, be it great or small, must therefore appeal to a wide range of attentive readers; and the value of such a book, in handy form, written by one who can practice what he preaches, and covering the entire question, with its many branches, must be obvious to the meanest comprehension.

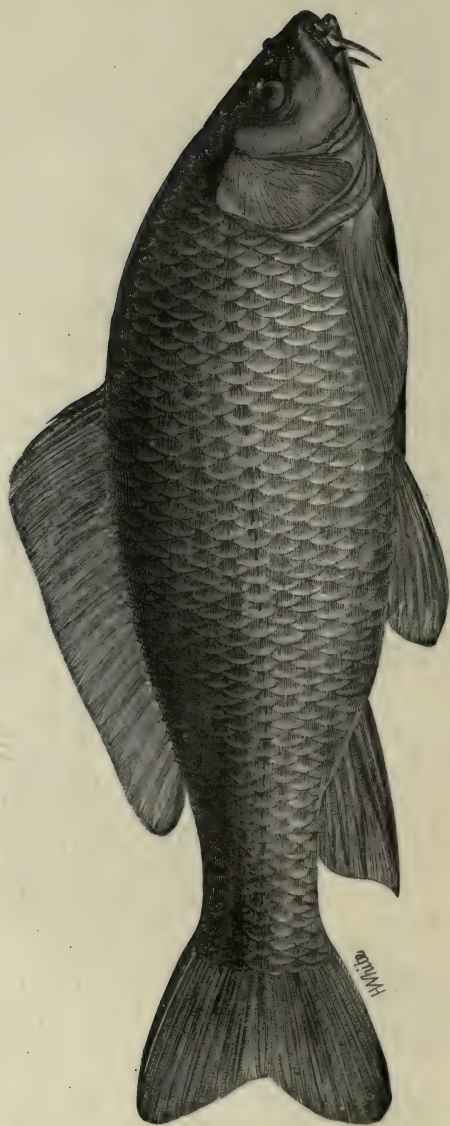
May the "Book of the All-Round Angler" send new recruits to the army; open up to many a town-dwelling man the sweets of country life as tasted by the fisherman on his occasional excursions to the river of his choice; and enable the experienced angler, who has long benefited by the privilege, to catch fish where he never caught them before, and more and more artfully match the growing wideawakeness of the game with added acuteness of his own.

RED SPINNER.

DIVISION I.

ANGLING FOR COARSE FISH.





Angling for Coarse Fish.

CHAPTER I.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

Fresh and Salt-water Fish of the United Kingdom—Haunts of Coarse Fish in Summer and Winter—Effect of Floods and Colour in Water—Use and Importance of Ground bait, &c., &c.



IN attempting a concise treatise on angling I am obliged, somewhat against my will, to confine my remarks solely to the practical portions of the subject, and to eschew that pleasant chit-chat about fish-lore, curious angling incidents, and the pleasures of the sport, on which writers on fishing have delighted to dilate since the time of

worthy Isaak Walton. This being an eminently practical age, the omission, which enables a careful description of tackle and methods of angling to be given, may not be regarded altogether as a defect, especially as there is little or nothing new to be added to the more ornamental portions of the subject.

I am going to start with the assumption that a number of my readers have never handled a rod, for too many writers have ignored the A B C of the subject, and thus made their works only of use to persons already possessing a fair knowledge of fish and fishing. From the A B C, I propose to gradually lead up to the X Y Z, by which algebraical formula I mean

the refinements of angling. With the hope of inducing my readers to think for themselves, and not go a-fishing on rule-of-thumb principles, I have devoted a few pages to some general remarks on the habits and peculiarities of what are termed "coarse fish"—remarks earnestly commended to the notice of beginners in the gentle art.

For the purpose of a book on angling the scientific classification of fish is a little inconvenient; I will therefore divide the fish which are found in and around the United Kingdom into the four following classes:—

1. *Fish affording Sport to the Angler in Fresh Water*: Salmon, trout, grayling, char, pike or jack, roach, perch, barbel, chub, dace, gudgeon, carp, tench, bream, rudd, bleak, and eels.

2. *Small-fry, or Fresh-water Fish insignificant from their size, some of which are used as Bait for other Fish*: Minnow, loach, ruffe or pope, miller's thumb or bullhead, and stickleback.

3. *Fish which are Rare, or are not commonly taken by Anglers in Fresh Water*: Lamprey, flounder, burbolt or burbot, graining, gwyniad, ide, pollan, powan, vendace, and azurine roach.

4. *Sea-fish*: Bass, pollack, coalfish, grey mullet, mackerel, braize, bream, brill, chad, cod, conger, dabs, dogfish, dory, flounder, garfish, gurnard, haddock, hake, halibut, herring, horse mackerel, ling, plaice, poor cod, red mullet, sea trout, skate, smelt, sole, turbot, whiting, whiting pout, and wrasse.

Of the first class, salmon and trout are usually captured by means of an artificial fly cast on the surface of the water, and by small natural or artificial fish, so arranged as to spin when drawn through the water. They are also fished for with worms, and a few other baits worked both on the bottom and near the surface of the water; and trout are fished for with natural flies. Grayling are mostly fished for with the artificial fly, but great numbers are also taken with worms and gentles worked in a peculiar manner. Char are caught occasionally with flies, but more often with leaded spinning minnows, and at night time with worms. Pike are almost altogether fished for with small fish, dead or alive, or repre-

sentations of them. The remaining twelve fish of the class, though some of them will occasionally rise to the artificial fly, are usually captured by what is known as bottom fishing, *i.e.*, fishing with a bait on or near the bottom. Most of these twelve fish require to be fished for in different ways: the methods often vary with the season; and not only with the season, but also with the place; and the position of the fish varies according to the season of the year, the colour and volume of the water, and the temperature of the water and air. It does not, therefore, require a large amount of intelligence to understand that, to angle successfully for these twelve fish in any river or lake of the United Kingdom, at any time of the year, involves the possession of a considerable amount of knowledge of the subject.

Before dealing with each fish specifically, I will endeavour to give some general ideas of their haunts in rivers, in spring, summer, autumn, and winter respectively, dealing with ponds and lakes later on.

In the spring months most coarse fish* are engaged in depositing their spawn among weeds, sedge, or on the bottom where the water is shallow. After spawning they are in an exhausted condition, desperately lean, desperately hungry, and therefore very easy to catch. Fortunately the law has prohibited their capture between March 14th and June 16th in most public waters in England, and I trust that any readers of this book who have an opportunity of angling in early spring during the fence months will not avail themselves of it. The fish at that time of the year give very little play, are absolutely worthless when caught, and their capture when out of condition is, by all sportsmanlike anglers, considered next door to poaching.

As after a certain interesting domestic event a visit to the seaside is often undertaken, so do roach, dace, chub, perch, barbel, and gudgeon after spawning visit clean, gravelly shallows where the current is swift, and the sparkling water

* All fish except salmon, trout, char, and grayling are usually so termed, though as a matter of fact some of them (*e.g.*, gudgeon and perch) are very delicate eating, and quite comparable with brown trout.

full of oxygen and very invigorating. At the end of two or three weeks they gradually work into water of a slightly greater depth—2ft. to 5ft.—where the stream is lively; but barbel very quickly take up their quarters in their regular haunts, which are for the most part weir pools, mill tails, deep holes, and eddies under clay banks. Chub, also, show a preference for swims under banks, especially those overshadowed by trees (having a weakness for insect food); but the majority of coarse fish do not move into deep water until about the end of July, and even then will often be found in only a few inches of water if the weather is very hot and the stream undisturbed by boats. Until the middle of August gudgeon remain in very shallow water, in the stream, and are most plentiful in swims bordering deep holes; but later on the largest ones are caught in swims 9ft. or 10ft. in depth. Tench and carp do not shift their position much during the summer, and are to be found mostly in moderately deep swims, close to weeds. Bream, also, dwell in deep holes, where the current is gentle.

The great thing to look for when fishing in the summer for roach, dace, perch, gudgeon, and pike, is a stream. Many anglers spoil their day's sport by fishing quiet corners where the water is still, and where there are no fish, except a few tench, eels, and a possible jack. Another thing to be borne in mind is that most fish will be found near and among weeds which give them shelter, and among which lies a large proportion of their food. The ideal swim for stream-loving fish during the hot months is one with weeds all round it, the bottom of soft, sandy gravel, the depth 5ft. to 10ft., and the stream moderate. And note well, that what I mean by a moderate stream is one moderate for any particular river. A moderate stream in the Thames would certainly be termed immoderate in the Bedfordshire Ouse, which runs for the most part sluggishly.

About August coarse fish begin to get into first-rate condition, and are found in somewhat deeper water than in the month preceding, but their exact position depends a good deal on the height of water and the character of the river. Rivers usually run fastest in the centre of their

channels, and therefore, in very dry seasons, the fish work out towards the middle to be in the stream. As a general rule, the higher the water, the nearer the fish are to the bank, and *vice versâ*.

September and October are, all things being considered, the two best months of the year for bottom fishing. In the earlier months the angler has been handicapped by the great majority of fish taking up impregnable positions in the weeds; but now the weeds begin to rot, and become unpalatable to the fish, which therefore leave them. A few frosty nights have a great effect in causing the weeds to rot, and perch and jack to feed. Slightly deeper water must now be fished, but the angler must still take care to keep out in the stream, unless fishing for pike, tench, carp, bream, or eels, which are often found in almost still water at this time of year.

There are a few other points connected with summer fishing which I should mention. The angler can hardly fish too early or too late (except for gudgeon and chub) during the hot months. Many a man who might have become a reputable member of the fraternity has been "choked off"—to use an unclassical expression—by making his first attempts at the gentle art in the broiling heat of a July or August sun. From sunrise to breakfast-time, and from sunset to supper-time, are the hours which should be devoted to angling in hot weather, but I need hardly say that during the summer occur dull, showery days, with a gentle breeze from the south-west, when the fish feed on and off all day. One great advantage of wind or rain is that these otherwise unpleasant elements ruffle the surface of the water, and thus hide the angler from the fish. Fish rarely feed well before a very heavy fall of rain. They seem to have an instinctive knowledge that a great feast of worms is coming, and that they need not trouble themselves about trifles. I have repeatedly noticed that after a very bad day's sport, when the weather has seemed favourable, torrents of rain have come, and caused the water to rise and colour.

Another point to be remembered in summer is that, the

water being clear and the light strong, fish can perceive the angler at some considerable distance, and that, therefore, the farther the angler can be from the fish he seeks to catch, the better. The shallower the water, the more distant should be the angler from the fish. By a very scientific method of fishing (to be subsequently described), practised by the anglers of Nottingham, this distant method of fishing is easily managed. The angler should be particularly careful to move about as little as possible if he thinks the fish can see him. I have noticed that certain fish care little for a man in full view of them who stands absolutely still, but the least movement on his part, and they are off. Above all things, the angler should never take up his position with the sun at his back, for a shadow on the water is fatal to success.

I need hardly say that the tackle should always be as fine as circumstances will allow, coarse, strong tackle only being advisable when, owing to weeds, old piles, stones, and such like, fish have to be held very hard to keep them from hanging themselves up. Some varieties of fish, particularly chub, when they have not seen the angler, and have no suspicion of his presence, will often take a bait presented to them on very coarse tackle; but once their suspicions are aroused, which, unfortunately, is usually the case, they either refuse to feed at all, or will only take a bait if the line is of the finest. Personally, I always use tackle as fine as I can get it consistent with strength, but in rivers which are little fished, and are not particularly bright, such extreme fineness is not really necessary.

In the summer, a very great variety of baits are taken by the fish; but as baits which are good in one water sometimes altogether fail elsewhere, it is as well to obtain local information on the subject where it is available. At the same time, where the sport with what I may term local baits is not forthcoming, I never hesitate to try baits new to the place, and by that means sometimes make a good basket of fish. In winter the most common, and generally the best, bait is a worm.

We come now to winter fishing. The chief changes in the

river at this time of the year are absence of weeds, a lower temperature of the water, and, generally, an increase in the volume of water, and therefore an increase in the force of the current. The water may also be more coloured than in summer. I will leave this question of colour for the present, and only consider the effects the other circumstances have on the position of fish. The fish having now no weed-cover, seek the deeper portions of the streams, and are no doubt greatly influenced in this move by the change in the temperature of the water. Barbel, carp, gudgeon, and eels now cease to afford any sport to the angler, and bream and tench bite but rarely; but roach, dace, perch, chub, and pike feed well in suitable weather, and are in prime condition. If the water has increased much in volume, the difficulty is to find sufficiently quiet swims, for swims which were suitable in summer cannot now be fished on account of the increased force of the current. Chub will be in the same swims as in August, except when the stream has become too strong for them; but the other fish shift about a good deal, according to the height and colour of the water. If no quiet swims with gravelly or sandy bottoms are to be found, those with a muddy bottom may be tried. In such places I have frequently made good bags of roach and perch. If the water is as low as it usually is in summer, and the weather open, not very much difference will be found in the position of the fish (pike excepted) in winter and summer, due allowance, of course, being made for the absence of weeds.

As a rule, most coarse fish are caught in winter, when rivers are clearing after floods, and it is floods and coloured water which make the greatest difference in the position of the fish. Floods drive them into the eddies and quiet corners where they can get out of the great force of the stream, and where, no doubt, their food collects. Colour in the water has the peculiar effect of bringing fish on to the shallows, and the thicker the water, the shallower are the swims in which they will be found. I have caught roach in winter, when the river has been very thick, in not more than 18in. of water. Had the water been clear at that season, I should have fished

at a depth of, perhaps, eighteen feet instead of inches. Two reasons probably bring fish into shallow water when the river is coloured: First, because in the deeps, light cannot reach the bottom, and food cannot be seen; and second, because many varieties of fish prefer shallow to deep water when they can safely come into such places without being seen by man and their other enemies. The best hours for fishing in the winter are from eleven to three, but a good deal depends on the temperature of the air, the fish feeding best during the more genial portion of the day.

When rivers rise in flood, and the water spreads over the meadows, the fish flock on to the grass, and feed on the drowned insects and worms. At such times it is, as a rule, of not much use to go fishing, owing to the great difficulty of finding the quarry; but an angler may unexpectedly stumble on a place where fish are collected together in great numbers, and have good sport; and local fishermen, who know the river thoroughly, can generally point out a spot or two where some fish are to be caught. On the whole, however, fishing when rivers are well over their banks is unsatisfactory work.

What I have said concerning floods and coloured waters applies nearly as much to summer as to winter fishing, the only difference being, that in summer the fish work out of the eddies into the stream rather sooner than they do in winter.

Concerning the haunts of fish at various seasons in lakes and ponds there is not much to be said, beyond that in summer the fish are to be found in water of moderate depth, shifting to somewhat deeper quarters in the autumn. Where the bottoms of such places are variously of mud and sand, or gravel, more fish will be found on the gravel or sand than on the mud; as in rivers, the fish will always be found near weeds. The most successful method of pond and lake fishing is to feed the fish regularly at certain places, and there angle for them. My experience of the Shannon lakes, which are like small inland seas, is that no coarse fish, except a few pike, are to be caught in winter (from November to February). In places these lakes are very deep, and to the deeps the fish probably repair on the advent of cold weather. It may be the same

in other lakes of similar size and depth, but I cannot speak from experience as to that.

In bottom fishing, the judicious use of ground-bait is very important. The old idea about ground-bait was that it collected vast numbers of fish together at one spot; but it is now known that in rivers it does not have that effect to any considerable extent (unless continued regularly for a week or more), but induces the fish to feed on certain food to which they were previously unused, and lulls their suspicions. For instance, a roach in the month of July is feeding on water-weed and the minute animal life which is found among weeds; a lump of paste is put before his nose, and he, naturally, if a well-informed roach, views it with suspicion, and probably refuses to take it. But if a quantity of bread and bran is cast into the water, he and his friends begin to feed, and look upon the lump of bread-paste as only a fragment of the rest. When fish are very shy, they will only take the bait on the hook during about two minutes after the ground-bait is thrown in; in such cases only small quantities should be used at a time. This peculiar property of ground-bait causing fish to feed, was forcibly brought to my mind only a few days ago. I was fishing under a bridge where I knew were some fine chub; the water was coloured, and my bait was a worm. At first the fish would not bite; after waiting a few minutes I threw in a few worms; just as these must have floated by my hook I had a bite, and caught a fine chub. Then came no more bites until I threw in more worms. I have known similar instances occur on many occasions.

As there is a limit to what fish can eat, it is very easy to throw in too much ground-bait; and it follows that, in waters where the fish are few, less ground-bait should be thrown in than where they are plentiful, and there are more to eat it. Another very important point—perhaps the most important of all—is to throw in the ground-bait at such a spot that it will reach the bottom just where your hook-bait is waiting for a fish to come and take it. There are ways of making ground-bait sink fast or slowly, which I will refer to later

on. Of course, if the water is shallow and slow running, the ground-bait can be thrown in nearly over the bait on the hook, while if the stream is swift and deep, the ground-bait must be thrown in some distance above the swim. The exact position depends on the depth of the water, the rate of the current, and the weight, or, rather, the specific gravity, of the ground-bait; these matters must necessarily be left to the angler's judgment.

So far I have only referred to the use of ground-bait while fishing. Ground-bait is very frequently thrown in daily for several days before the swim is fished. The amount thrown in is usually considerable—more in rivers than in still waters—and it is highly desirable to leave the fish unfed (so that they may recover their appetite) for at least twenty hours before the swim is fished. While the fishing is going on, a little ground-bait is thrown in at intervals, to keep the fish on the look-out for food, but not sufficient to satisfy their hunger.

In lakes and ponds, I am inclined to believe that ground-baiting for several days in succession does collect the fish in one spot, besides having the other advantages mentioned; there being no stream in such places, there is no difficulty in knowing where to cast in the ground-bait. If more is thrown in than the fish can eat, a portion is likely to turn sour and keep the fish away.

The secrets of ground-baiting are, shortly—to use ground-bait of the same kind as the hook-bait, but coarser in quality—the reason for which is, I hope, obvious; to cast it in sparingly when fishing the swim—little and often being the rule; to cast it in so far above the swim that it sinks just where the angler is fishing; and lastly, if the swim is baited for several days in succession, to leave it unbaited for at least twenty hours before it is fished. Careful attention to these particulars is half the battle in angling for coarse fish. Shall I insult my readers' common-sense by adding that ground-bait should not be mixed or handled with dirty hands, or even with clean hands if scented with tobacco smoke? The points which anglers have to be careful about are—not

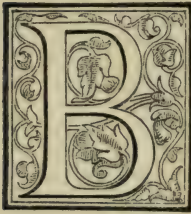
to excite the suspicions of the fish by showing themselves more than needful, by tramping the banks, by disturbing the water, by casting a shadow over the fish, or by dragging the bait through the water more often than is absolutely necessary. The bait should sink as slowly and as naturally as possible (except in punt-fishing in a strong stream, when it has to sink quickly); it should not, with certain exceptions, be checked in its course down stream, and should generally be worked close to the bottom. The swims which are likely to contain the most fish should be chosen, and the angler will, if he be wise, go after the fish which are most likely to be on the feed. My dearest friend cannot persuade me to jack fish in the middle of a hot summer's day, though I will gladly catch gudgeon or fly-fish for chub with him; nor, on the other hand, can he induce me to gudgeon fish in November, when I know I am likely to do well with the jack. Going after the wrong fish is one of the most common mistakes with beginners.

The matters I have so far written about are well worth patient study, for when the general principles of angling are mastered the rest comes very easy, and the angler, instead of working by rule of thumb, understands the why and the wherefore of what he does, or is directed to do, and acquires the power of meeting any difficulties which may arise. The mere hooking and landing a fish are comparatively simple matters, acquired in a few months' practice. The great difficulties in bottom fishing are to find the fish, and, when they are found, to induce them to take the bait offered to them. In fishing, as in most other matters, common sense will be found of great service; but it must be confessed that fish are eccentric animals, and often act in a way "no fellah can understand."

CHAPTER II.

TACKLE FOR BOTTOM FISHING.

*Rods—Rod-fittings—Reels and Winches—Running Lines—
Hooks—Gut, Hair, Knots, and Leads—Float Tackle and Floats
Leger and Paternoster—Landing-net, &c., &c.*



BEFORE we go a-fishing a visit has to be paid to the tackle-shop, and about the first thing we buy is

The Rod.—At the present day a most marvellous and almost bewildering assortment of fishing-rods are offered for sale, adapted to every conceivable purpose. The use of a rod is to strike in the hook, to keep an even strain on a fish's mouth, and to guide him from weeds, old stumps and other dangers, safely into the landing-net—in anglers' language, to "play" him. If our tackle is strong, and we are thus able to put a great deal of pressure on the fish, we can use a stiff rod; but if our tackle is fine, and the pressure on the fish has to be of a very gentle character, it becomes very desirable to have a light, pliant, yielding rod. Of the twelve fish with which we are now concerned, roach, dace, perch, rudd, and gudgeon require a light rod, with a not too stiff top, as they are fished for with very fine tackle, the line being often nothing more than a hair from a stallion's tail. The other fish, which run to a considerable size, of course require something stronger and stouter. The choice of a rod is somewhat a matter of fancy, no two anglers quite agreeing as to what is best; but I am inclined to think that a very light South Caro-

lina or East Indian cane (bamboo)* 10ft. or 11ft. punt-rod, and an 11ft. or 12ft. rod, of East Indian cane, a good deal stouter and stronger, but in other respects similar, will be found very suitable for bottom fishing generally. For ladies or boys slightly shorter rods are advisable. These bottom rods are usually made with lancewood tops, but greenheart is far better, and should always be ordered. The light 11ft. rod is best made in three pieces, each 3ft. 8in. in length; and it is a capital plan to have an extra butt (the butt is the lowest length) made the same, or a greater length, which can be added when a longish rod (15ft. 8in.) is required. The increased cost is very trifling. I have adopted this plan for some years with, occasionally, great advantage.

If the angler can only afford to purchase one rod, he will have to choose one something between the two above described; and whether he buy only one, or a dozen, he should take a friend with him who understands such matters. It is next to impossible to give an exact description of a rod on paper.

* I am indebted to a gentleman connected with the wholesale fish-hook and tackle trade for the following account (sent me with specimens) of the various canes which are called indiscriminately bamboo or bamboo canes, and are used in rod-making:—

"First in point of importance is, undoubtedly, the '*East India*,' or '*Mottled*.' These canes are largely used for splitting for built cane fly-rods, also for making up into spinning and trolling rods, and bottom rods of all kinds, and even for stiff fly-rods. They grow to 20ft. and 25ft. long, and taper to a point.

"'*Carolina*,' or '*South*' cane (or '*South Carolina*,' which is the proper name, and which indicates, I suppose, the locality where grown), is what is ordinarily used for cane or bamboo bottom and general rods. It is much cheaper than East India cane, and of course lighter, though not nearly so strong. Canes of this kind are rarely obtainable larger than about lin. in diameter at the thick end, and are about the same length, and taper to a point, as the East India cane. I send you a sample stained as well as plain, as the staining so alters the appearance that you might take them for two distinct sorts. This Carolina cane is now getting rather scarce, so another kind has been introduced, called by the cane-importers, '*Yellow Bamboo Rods*.' They are about the same lengths, &c., as the Carolinas, and though much stronger, are not so good for rod-making, as the knots are so large and prominent, and there is always a flat piece, or '*gutter*,' going up from each knot. They are called by some people '*Japanese*' canes, though I don't think they come from Japan.

"'*White Spanish*,' or '*Portuguese*' cane (or, properly, *reed*) is very light, and is used for making—the butts and tops excepted—the long roach rods which the Lea roach-fishers use. They grow up to about 20ft. long, and towards the thin end the knots are very close together.

"*Tonquins* are only to be got in short lengths, about 3½ft., of various sizes, from about ¾in. to lin. diameter. They are nearly straight—i.e., there is little, if any, taper on them; they are very strong, will almost stand jumping on, but are necessarily heavy.

"*Jungle Cane* is solid and very heavy. It is used to split up for splicing on the ends of lancewood and other fly tops. The piece sent is a length between two knots, and is just ready for splitting.

"F. W."

For roach-fishing (after the manner of the London bank anglers) in large rivers, such as the Thames, it is necessary to buy a white cane roach-rod, from 15ft. to 20ft. in length, straight, stiff for the most part, tapering gradually from the butt, and as little topheavy as possible. This rod, which is by no means a strong one, will be found of little use except for roach-fishing from the bank. The Thames and Lea roach-fishermen like to have the points of their rods just over the float, and as in summer weeds often fringe the shore for a considerable distance out, these very long rods are necessary for this particular style of angling. My plan, of sometimes using an extra butt with the light 11ft. rod, gives a fair makeshift for the regulation Lea roach-rod.

When a rod is being chosen, it should always be handled with a reel attached to its butt, otherwise its true balance cannot be ascertained. Formerly most rods were made of hard wood—hickory and greenheart being great favourites; but as bamboo is not only very light, but also possesses the requisite strength, it has very properly become the favourite material for most bottom fishing and spinning rods. People who have the good fortune to live close to a river or lake should use rods made of one single piece of bamboo, with a jungle-cane top, a few inches in length, spliced on. These are the most delightful rods I know of. The only disadvantage connected with their use is that they cannot be taken to pieces and put in a bag. They are largely used by the professional fishermen of the Thames. To prevent rods warping, it is a good plan to tie a loop of string at one end of each joint, fasten on a weight at the other, and hang the joints up by the loops. Rods should be re-varnished once a year, if much used.

Rod-fittings.—Besides cane or wood, a rod consists of metal ferrules round the ends of the joints, an arrangement for fastening a winch or reel to the butt, and rings to convey the line from the reel to the top of the rod. On fly-rods it is usual to have various devices connected with the ferrules, to prevent the joints from coming apart, and as, when casting out the tackle used in bottom fishing, joints do occasionally

fly out, I do not see why these same devices should not also be used on bottom rods. Two arrangements of the kind which are well adapted for the purpose are Hardy's patent lock-fast joint (see Fig. 1) and Farlow's rod-joint fastener. The lower ends of joints should be always what is termed double brazed—i.e., completely covered with brass. Joints sometimes stick together. By holding them in the flame of a spirit-lamp, or candle, they will usually come apart, the outside ferrule expanding with the heat. It is as well to rub the joints occasionally with vaseline or soft soap; this prevents them sticking.

The most common method of fastening the reel or winch to the rod consists of two brass rings—one fixed, the other sliding. The best arrangement of the kind is that known as the Weeger wedge-fast winch-fitting, and there are others which also answer their purpose admirably, such as Warner's patent winch-fitting (in which no rings are used) and Farlow's Universal winch-fitting.

Rod-rings are either upright and rigid, or movable. The former are by far the best, and if made of hard metal, according to the pattern illustrated in Fig. 2, the line will not catch round them. For the top ring of all I have a natural prejudice—shared by a good many other anglers—in favour of the ring shown in Fig. 3. Rings made on that pattern work on pivots, save a good deal of wear and tear to the line by diminishing friction, and the line rarely fouls round them as it does with most other rings. An



FIG. 1.
FASTENING
FOR ROD-
JOINTS.



FIG. 2. SNAKE-
SHAPED
ROD-RING.



FIG. 3.
"BICKER-
DYKE"
ROD-TOP
RING.

interior ring of Phosphor Bronze is introduced into the more expensive of these rings, and is decidedly an advantage.

If I was ordering a bottom rod to be made for me according to the above ideas, it would shortly be described as a mottled East India cane 10ft. (or longer, according to requirements) bottom rod, three joints, two greenheart tops (one being shorter and slightly stouter than the other), extra butt, snake rings, Bickerdyke top ring, Weeger winch-fitting, lockfast joints. Either of the winch-fittings or fastenings for joints I have mentioned would answer almost as well as those given in this description. I must confess to rather a fancy for "South" cane for light rods. It might be best to have the lighter rod of "South" cane, and the heavier rod of East India cane.

Reels and Winches.—The apparatus on which the main line, or "running tackle," is wound, is either a reel or a winch. Of these useful things there are numberless kinds, and the angler can, if it please him, pay thirty shillings for a most elaborate affair. My own choice would fall on either a plain check brass winch, or a wooden Nottingham reel with a check which can be taken on or off, and fitted with a wire guard—an idea of my own—to prevent the line uncoiling and entangling. Of the two, I much prefer the reel, on account of the rapidity with which the line can be wound on it, thanks to the large circumference of the barrel, and the facility with which it can be turned into a fast-running Nottingham winch by merely moving the button at the back. These reels (see Fig. 4) are sold everywhere, and my guard can be put on them by any metal-worker for a few pence. The

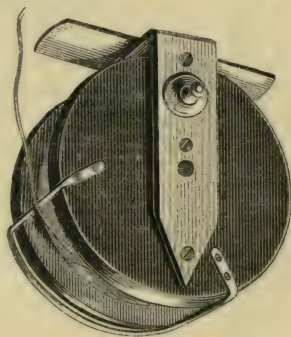


FIG. 4. NOTTINGHAM REEL WITH MOVABLE CHECK AND IMPROVED LINE-GUARD.

combination reels sold by Slater, of Newark-on-Trent, are somewhat similar in their working, and are admirable for all kinds of fishing. There are other combination reels sold which are far from satisfactory. For the small rod already described, a reel 3in. in diameter will be found suitable. A 2½in., or even a 2in., reel will *do* to hold 50yds. or so of fine line for roach-fishing; but I prefer the larger size, because it winds the line in much faster than the smaller size, gives ample room for the line, and helps to balance the rod. For the heavier rod I should use a 3½in. reel. It is a good plan (especially when the line is fine) to put a little wadding round the barrel of the reel before the line is wound on.

Running Lines.—The only lines for bottom fishing worthy of mention are those made of silk, either plaited or twisted. The twisted lines kink if any quantity of line is left loose; but those anglers who acquire the art of Nottingham fishing (see Chap. III.) never do leave any loose folds to kink, and prefer these lines on account of their strength, which is greater than that of a plaited line of the same size. Persons who cannot or do not wish to fish after the Nottingham method had better use plaited lines. For roach and gudgeon-fishing the line should be of pure silk, plaited or twisted, and as fine as it can be obtained; but more generally useful is the Nottingham line used for chub-fishing. It is strong enough for chub or perch, and is fine enough for roach-fishing. It is also very cheap; I get 100yds. of this size line from Carter and Peek, of Islington, for 2s. On the large reel a plaited line, about double the thickness of the roach-line, and dressed with an oil dressing, will be found useful for the larger varieties of fish. If, however, a Nottingham line is preferred, it should be just a trifle thicker than the one used for chub. These lines being very fine, soon get worn out, and after a long day's fishing it is always as well to break off 4yds. or 5yds. of line, which is no great loss. A really well-dressed waterproof line is a most difficult thing to procure from a tackle-shop, as the makers use too much driers in their mixtures, and the lines dry quickly and hard. A well-dressed

line takes months to dry, but it dries soft, and does not "knuckle," *i.e.*, crack. It is very necessary to have a soft dressing for lines intended to be used in bottom fishing. The very best dressing is simply raw linseed oil, but it takes such a long time to dry that it is rarely used; next best is boiled linseed oil. The line is soaked for a week in the oil (cold), then stretched between two trees, well rubbed with a piece of smooth leather (this gets air-bubbles out of the line), and then put to soak for two more days. It is then stretched between the trees, the superfluous oil wiped gently off, and left to dry—an operation which will take about two months. In wet weather the line must be taken indoors. When this first coat is dry, the line should be put into the oil for two more days, and again be put out to dry. Altogether the operation takes about six months. A line so prepared will last for years. If it is desirable to put on a fine polish, this can be easily done, when the line is dry, by well rubbing it with a piece of leather on which is a little raw linseed oil.

It is never advisable to re-dress lines with any boiled oil mixture, or at any time to soak them in hot liquids. A simple method of dressing lines, new or old, is to rub them briskly with a cake made of pure paraffin wax and deer or mutton kidney suet in equal parts. This dressing has frequently to be renewed. Twisted lines are sometimes dressed. Their strength is their chief recommendation. New lines should be very carefully uncoiled. I am indebted to Mr. Pennell for the following capital dodge: Make a cylinder out of a newspaper, and place it through the middle of the coil of line. Put a stick through the paper, and rest the ends of the stick on two chairs. Fasten the loose end of the line to the reel, and wind away. The newspaper, of course, turns on the stick, and the line comes off freely.

Lines should *always* be unwound to dry after a day's fishing. They can be coiled round chair-backs, or, *if plaited*, merely left on the floor or on a table. Messrs. Farlow & Co. sell a capital winder for drying lines.

Hooks.—There are nearer a hundred than fifty different bends of hooks. The ordinary round bend, of which a scale

of sizes is given (Fig. 5), is most useful for bottom fishing generally; but the well-known Crystal hooks (see Fig. 6) are

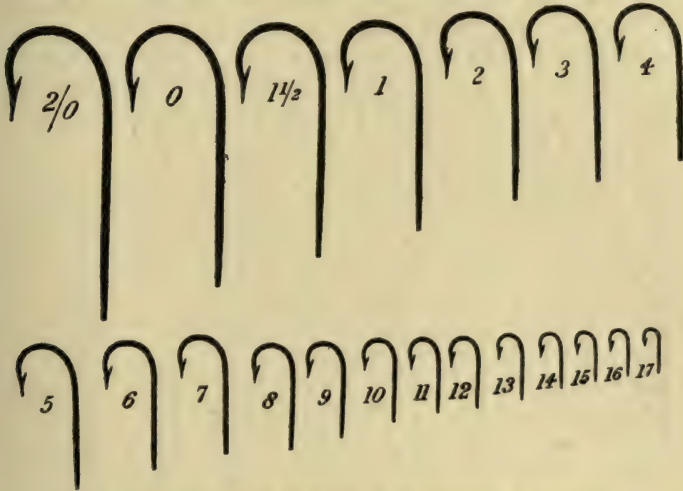


FIG. 5. ROUND BEND HOOK-SCALE, WITH REDDITCH NUMBERING.

first-rate for roach-fishing with gentles or small worms; and in larger sizes I have found them admirable for perch-fishing in summer, when the bait is a minnow. In bottom fishing, nothing but the round bend need be used; but I prefer the Crystal hooks for the purposes named. It is the worst possible economy to buy cheap hooks; more than half those manufactured are rubbish. A hook should be carefully tempered, so that when tested with the thumb-nail it is not too soft, and, bending, remains bent like a piece of lead; nor too hard, snapping off like a piece of cast-iron. The careful angler will test every hook before attaching it to his line.



FIG. 6. CRYSTAL HOOK.

Hooks are usually fastened to the line by laying the end

of the gut (first bitten to make it flat) along the shank of the hook, and binding the two together with fine silk which has first been rubbed on cobbler's wax; the wax can be held in a piece of leather. Various methods of preparing wax for this purpose have been suggested, but I have never found one possessing the stickfast qualities of the old-fashioned cobbler's wax. The binding should be begun at the end of the shank, and finished off as soon as the end of the gut has been reached (see Fig. 7). The loops in the illustration of course have to be pulled tight. The same finish is effected by laying the end of the tying-silk along the shank, and pointing in the same direction as the shank, and taking three more turns with the other part of the silk, passing the bend and point of the hook through the loop at each turn. Nothing then remains but to pull the end of the silk which lies along the shank tight. This most useful finish is well worth learning. The shank may be touched with shellac varnish (two parts gum Benjamin, six parts shellac, eight parts spirits of wine) or coloured. As the shank of the hook is very frequently visible to the fish, it ought to be the same colour as the bait. The best mixture for the purpose, recommended by Bailey, of Nottingham, is a little finely-ground vermilion, chrome yellow, or white lead (according to the colour desired), moistened with a few drops of French polish. This paint can be laid on thinly with a small camel's-hair brush, and the hooks, when painted or varnished, should be stuck into a piece of cork to dry. Another good preparation for this purpose is "Chez-lui" enamel, sold at 346, Euston Road, London. The points of all hooks should be sharp, and the barbs should be small, particularly in hooks used for the chub, barbel, and carp. A rank barb—one which projects much from the hook—has the fatal effect of frequently preventing the hook going through the

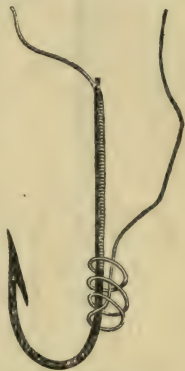


FIG. 7. FASTENING OFF THE BINDING.

lip of the fish. Personally, I would rather have no barb at all for bottom fishing than a large, rank one. In the twentieth century hooks may be made with modified barbs, but at present the angler is well advised if he carries a small needle or watch-maker's file, and reduces the barbs and sharpens up the sides of the points of all large-sized hooks. Fig. 8 illustrates a very improved form of hook for worm-fishing, invented by Mr. R. B. Marston. The barb on the shank keeps the worm in its place.



FIG. 8. THE MARSTON SLICED HOOK.

Eyed hooks—that is, hooks with a small eye at the end of the shank, to which the line is fastened—are not much used by bottom fishers, but it is as well to have a few of various sizes in one's book. These hooks are easily fastened to gut by the method (one of several) shown in Fig. 9, and known as the Turle knot. I doubt if there is a better one for bottom fishing. The gut is (1) put through the eye, and a slip-knot made in it; (2) the hook is then put through the noose, and

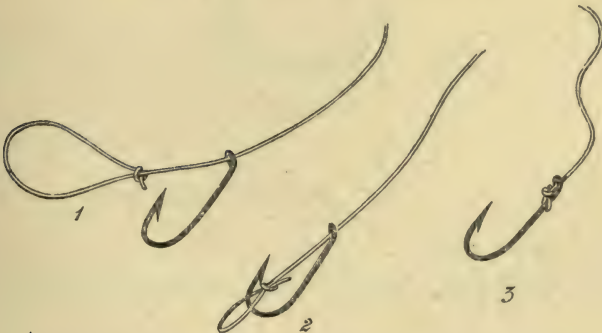


FIG. 9. THE METHOD OF FASTENING EYED HOOKS TO GUT.

(3) the noose pulled tight. Stewart tackle is easily made with eyed hooks (see Chap. III.).

Gut, Hair, Knots, and Leads.—Silkworm gut is now more used for the lower portions of fishing-lines than anything else, but horsehair is preferred for roach-fishing by many London bank anglers who excel in that branch of the art. Gut is manufactured in lengths varying from about

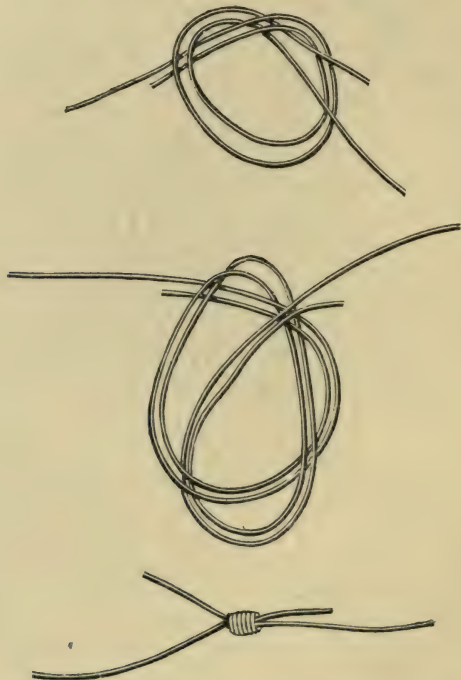


FIG. 10. KNOT (IN THREE STAGES) FOR JOINING LENGTHS OF GUT TOGETHER.

10in. to 20in. It is sold either as it comes from Spain, or else mechanically reduced in thickness by being softened and drawn through metal plates, when it is called, technically, *fine-drawn gut*.

For roach-fishing in summer, *fine-drawn gut*, or hair, must

be used. The former quickly gets rough, and as soon as this happens it should either be rubbed smooth with indiarubber, or a fresh length used. The finest undrawn gut is useful for fish which do not exceed 2lb. in weight. Larger fish require stronger tackle, unless the water is free from weeds. Good gut is round, long, and free from specks when held up to the light. The lengths are best joined together by the knot shown in Fig. 10; but the gut must be first soaked in cold water—rain-water for preference—for at least an hour. When time is valuable, warm water may be used, but its use is not advisable. The hook-link generally has a loop at the end of it, which is used to fasten the hook to a corresponding loop at the end of the main length of gut (see Fig. 11). Gut is sold ready made up into 1yd., 2yd., or 3yd. lengths, or in hanks of a hundred pieces, which require tying together.

As to whether gut should be stained or not, there is a difference of opinion among anglers; but I never yet heard

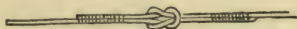


FIG. 11. HOOK-LINK LOOPED TO GUT-LENGTH.

anyone deny that gut which has to lie on the bottom—as in leger fishing—should be stained to as nearly as possible match the gravel or sand. Gut which does not lie on the bottom should, I think, be stained to harmonise and appear a part of the river vegetation—green in summer, brown in autumn and winter. Judson's dyes, used strong, are most useful for staining gut. More simple stains are ink, strong coffee lees, and strong green tea. I need hardly indicate the colours which they give to the gut. Ink gives a neutral tint, which is useful for gut used in fly-fishing. Ink and coffee mixed make a muddy stain, admirable for gut which has to lie on a muddy bottom. To preserve gut, keep it out of the light, wrapped in wash-leather or a sheet of pure indiarubber. Gut should always be soaked in cold water before being used. One of the best methods of attaching

the loop in the gut at the end of the float or other tackle, to the running line, is shown in Fig. 12.

Horsehair is most useful for roach and gudgeon lines. It is not so strong nor so fine as fine-drawn gut, but I have long been of the opinion that the fish are less suspicious of it than of gut. Hair is superior to gut in being elastic, long, and neither glistening when new nor fraying when old. The best horsehair comes from the tails of stallions. That obtained at violin bow-makers' is sure to be good. I prefer light brown horsehair to any other. Hair may be tied with the same knot as gut. If the angler is fishing Nottingham fashion, with his float at some distance, he should not use hair, on account of its elasticity; but when fishing under the point of a long, stiff rod, as do the London roach-fishers, the elasticity is a decided advantage.



FIG. 12. METHOD OF ATTACHING GUT-TACKLE TO RUNNING LINE.

There are two methods of weighting a line—with split shot, or with lead wire. The former are more commonly used. They can be split with a small, inexpensive machine made for this purpose, or with a penknife, if half sunk in a small hole in a piece of wood. They are usually bought ready split. They are either bitten on to the line, or pinched on with pincers. If the line is fine, whether gut or horsehair, it should either be double where the shots are placed, or be served round with silk. Lead wire answers as well as shots. To fix it, lay a darning-needle, or long pin, alongside the line, and twist the wire round both needle and line. When enough wire has been twisted on, withdraw the needle, and twist up the coil tighter.

Float-tackle and Floats.—Having purchased rod, reel-line, and hooks, the next thing to buy, or to make up—for the making up is a very simple matter—is the gut or hair line, on which are the hook, float, and either split shot or some lead wire, used to partially sink the float in the water, and keep it in a perpendicular position and the bait near

the bottom. The accompanying sketch (Fig. 13) shows the position of the float in the water and the tackle beneath it.



FIG. 13. TYPICAL
FLOAT-TACKLE.

It will be noticed that the line passes through a ring at the bottom of the float, and is kept in position by a cap, usually of quill or indiarubber, which encircles the top of the float. The best float-caps I know of are made of a material resembling oilcloth. The float shown is one of the best for roach-fishing in rivers. It is made of a piece of goose-quill, stopped at the bottom with the end of a porcupine-quill. The top should be touched with red paint. The lowest shot should be usually a little above the length of gut on which the hook is tied (9in. or 10in. from the hook), and the others about 9in. higher. Five shots are shown in the engraving, but the exact number, of course, depends on the buoyancy of each particular float, and can

only be found by experiment. A float should be always looked upon as a necessary evil, and should be as small as the stream will allow. The size of the float should depend on the amount of lead one has to put on the line to keep the hook near the bottom. The faster the stream, the more weight is required, and *vice versa*. As a matter of fact, it is wiser to regulate the float to the shot, rather than the shot to the float. In perfectly still water anglers sometimes use no weight on the line at all, the float being what is termed a self-cocking one—*i.e.*, weighted at the lower end. A piece of lead wire wound round the lower end of any float makes it self-cocking. A few shot, or a little quicksilver, are sometimes placed inside a float made of two pieces of quill; this also causes it to cock without any shot being on the line. When no weight is used on the line, the bait, of course, sinks slowly and naturally. The tackle shown in Fig. 13 is suitable for many kinds of bottom fishing in moderate streams. In stronger streams, more shot, placed nearer the hook, and a larger float, should be

used. The float from which the drawing was made is $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. long. It was a favourite float of the late J. G. Fennell, Author of the "Book of the Roach," and was given me just before his death.

Of floats there is an endless variety offered to the angler. There are pretty things made up of quill, and beautifully tapered with bone ends; others of cork—gaudy arrangements of blue and red; and others, again, of reed; but the best, least expensive, and most workmanlike floats are quills from the wing-feathers of large birds, such as geese, swans, turkeys, and pelicans. These are buoyant, carrying, for their size, a large amount of shot, and slide into the water very quickly, without frightening the fish. When a very small float is required, nothing is better than a small porcupine-quill, which

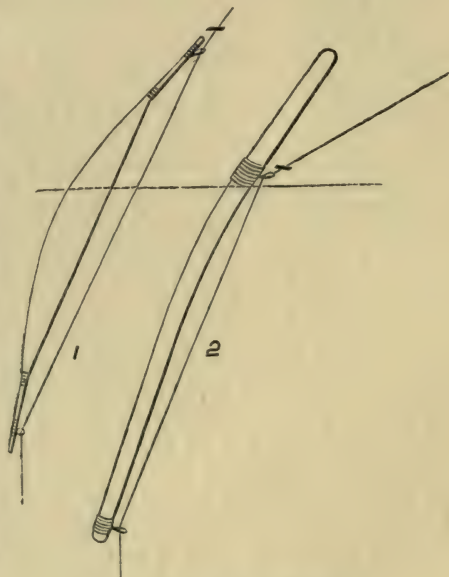


FIG. 14. TWO SLIDING FLOATS.

will carry at most two or three No. 2 shots. If cork floats are used, they should be nicely tapered, and the two ends should be made by a single porcupine-quill run through the centre of the cork. Fig. 14 represents two sliding floats—one (1) of cork, and the other (2) of quill—so called because they slide down the line. They are kept from slipping too high up the line by a fragment of indiarubber, gut, or a bristle placed on the line, so small that it will go through the rings of the

rod, yet so large that it will not slip through the rings on the float. The use of these floats will be described later on. For a beginner, the purchase of three quills of different sizes will probably be found sufficient. Five feet is an average length of gut to have between the hook and the running line.

The Leger and Paternoster.—These quaintly-named pieces of tackle are used for fishing without a float—on the bottom and just off the bottom respectively. Fig. 15 shows very clearly the construction of the leger. The lead works on a foot of the finest patent gimp, at each end of which is a bead or split shots. The hook above the lead is usually omitted, except in winter fishing, when a live-bait is put on it, and a worm on the lower hook. The leger is made light or heavy according to the strength of the stream. In some cases only a light pistol-bullet is used, and the gimp omitted. The gut below the lead should be at least 36in. in length, above it, about 24in. The paternoster, being used almost entirely for perch-fishing, will be found described in Chapter IV.

Landing-net.—A most useful affair for lifting fish into the boat or on to the bank when hooked. The larger the ring of the net is, up to a diameter of 18in., the better. The angler must be the judge of how much he likes to burden himself with when he goes fishing. If he has to carry his own impedimenta, he will probably prefer a small net, but if he fishes from a punt, a large one. The landing-nets used by Thames puntsmen are usually of large mesh, mounted on an iron ring 18in. in diameter, which is lashed on to a 6ft. ash pole. Of the light folding-nets, I think the “Hi Regan,” recently patented by Warner & Sons, of Redditch, is the best.

FIG. 15. THE
LEGER.

A very inexpensive folding-net is made in the shape of a triangle, two sides of which are of wood, the other of light

cord. If the angler fishes a good deal from the bank, and is in the habit of roving about with a paternoster for perch, or with Nottingham tackle for coarse fish generally, he of course wants some arrangement for carrying his net. I have had several, and have come to the conclusion that the one largely used by the Hampshire fly-fishermen (see Fig. 16) is the best suited to the purpose. The net can easily be drawn

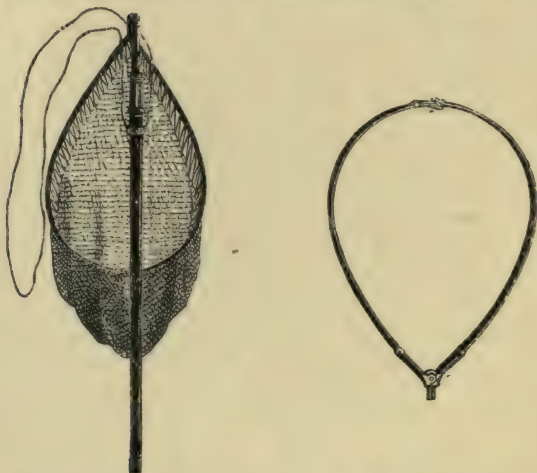


FIG. 16. PORTABLE FOLDING LANDING-NET AND BOW OF "HI REGAN" NET.

from its sling with one hand, and a slight jerk causes it to spring out straight, and the handle, which is telescopic, to double its length.

Plummet, Disgorger, and Sundries.—Plummetts are either made of rolled lead, or consist of a solid piece of lead (see Fig. 17), with a brass ring at the top, and cork let into the base. The hook is put through the ring, and fastened into the cork. Plummetts are used for taking the depth; but by sticking a piece of tallow in a hollow scooped out of the plummet, the nature of the bottom is easily discovered. Plummetts are very necessary articles, and the man who often goes a-fishing will do well to have one in a pocket of each of his fishing-

coats. When forgotten, a stone, penknife, or bunch of keys are sometimes made to answer the same purpose. If the keys catch in a weed, and the line breaks, the angler never afterwards forgets his plummet. There are two or three machines made called depth-gauges; they answer their purpose, but I do not think them necessary, and for some reasons they are even undesirable.



FIG. 17. PLUMMET.

The disgorger is a most useful instrument, by the aid of which hooks are inveigled out of fishes' mouths. The best are made as shown in Fig. 18. Either end is used, according to circumstances; usually the twisted end is preferred. The line is got into the centre of the twist, and the disgorger run down right on to the hook wherever it is buried in the fish; the line should then be twisted round the disgorger, and a turn of the wrist brings the hook away—an affair of five seconds where fingers are not all thumbs. It is not a bad plan, in lieu of the forked end, to turn the end of the wire into a ring. The disgorger can then be fastened by a cord to a buttonhole, and is always ready when wanted.

Among the sundries are metal boxes for gentles and other bait. These should be large, but flat, to go conveniently into the pocket, and be pierced with plenty of air-holes. Several neat little arrangements for holding bait, which can be strapped on to the waist, are sold at the tackle-shops and, when the angler walks and fishes, will be found useful. Bags are the best worm-containers. Then the angler requires winders on which to keep his lines, a book for hooks, or winder and hook-book combined. Of these the tackle-shops offer a pleasing variety, suited to all sorts and conditions of men and purses. The angler should also carry a pair of pocket-scissors; cobbler's wax, stored in a piece of leather or small tin box; binding silk, fine but strong and varnish for

FIG. 18.
IMPROVED
DISGORGER.

bindings of hooks, &c. (see page 20). As to creels, baskets, and bags, the angler may please himself. My idea of a creel is one with a flat top, on which I can sit, with a partition, horizontal or perpendicular, to divide my lunch, tobacco, &c., from any fish I may catch. For bottom fishing, one of large size is often required.

I believe I have now mentioned all the tackle that is generally requisite for coarse fish; but in their appropriate places one or two special articles will be found described. To go into all the modifications of tackle which circumstances occasionally render necessary would require a volume three times as large as this. The angler must have a certain amount of ingenuity in him to be worth his salt, and in no branch of angling is his ingenuity of more use to him than in bottom fishing. He should always be asking himself: Can I safely fish any finer? Is not my line too coarse? Have I not too many shots on? Is not my float too large? If the line can with safety be finer, it is too coarse; if the bait will keep the bottom with less shot, too many shot are on the line; and if a smaller float can be used, the one on the line is too large. Whatever happens—and queer things do happen out fishing—invent something to meet the emergency. Never fold your hands and say “It’s no good.” I know heaps of men who go fishing who hardly know one end of the rod from the other, and yet they catch fish—for the simple reason, that they fish with other people’s brains. There is my good friend, worthy Sir Cræsus Goldstick, who, when he retires to his country seat on the Norfolk Broads, after the labours of the Session, has an hour or two at the bream. His skilful keeper finds a good swim, baits it, arranges the tackle, moors the boat, baits the hook, and lands the fish. Sir Cræsus lifts the rod when the float goes under, pulls till the fish comes to the surface, and, thinking himself an angler, boasts of his catch. Bah! his keeper was the angler, and Sir Cræsus a mere automaton doing his bidding. I say, no man should call himself an angler unless he can catch fish without a skilled assistant to do the greater part of the work for him.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROACH.

Roach-fishing a Fine Art—A Summer Day's Roach-fishing—Baits and Ground-bait—Finding a Swim—Float-fishing in Thames Style—Playing and Landing Fish—A Jack in the Swim—Nottingham Fishing—Tight Corking, and Legering with a Float—Fishing with Silk-weed—Punt-fishing—Legering for Roach—Fishing in High and Coloured Water—Catching, Scouring, and Keeping Lob-worms—Winter Fishing—Roach-fishing in Lakes, Ponds, Meres, and Canals.



THE roach—called in Cheshire the roach-dace—is the most popular of the coarse fish. It abounds in almost every lake, pond, canal, and quiet-running stream in England, but is not found in Ireland. It affords capital sport on the fine tackle essential to its capture, and in autumn and winter, if skilfully cooked, is not altogether uneatable.

It is a remarkably handsome fish, being for the most part silvery, eyes, fins, and tail tinged with red, but, as with all other fish, the back is the darkest portion—a steely blue or green, quickly turning to silver on the sides and belly. The scales are rather large, and are easily displaced. In weight roach vary from a few ounces to about 3½lb., but one of 2lb. is very rarely captured, and probably not two anglers out of 500 have ever seen a roach that size. Small roach are sometimes mistaken for rudd, and *vice versâ*. They are, however, easily distinguished by a glance at their mouths. Rudd have projecting

top lips, which come down like the hood of a bathing-machine; in roach the under lip projects. Hybrids between roach and rudd are not unknown.

I want it to be understood at the outset that roach-fishing, so far as the larger fish are concerned, is not a very simple operation. It is the fashion with a certain number of fly-fishers, more especially those who fish exclusively for salmon, to talk somewhat slightly of roach-fishing, and of bottom fishing generally. Now the truth is that in respect of clear-flowing rivers which are often visited by anglers, roach-fishing has been quite as much reduced, or rather elevated, to a fine art, as salmon-fishing, if not more so. The difficulties of getting the fish to take the bait are certainly not less with roach than with salmon, and there is not so great a difference as might be supposed in the skill required after the fish are hooked. The salmon-fisher plays his twenty-pounder with the strongest gut; the roach-fisher plays his one-and-a-half-pounder on a single hair. Let the two change rods, and I warrant me the roach has a better chance of escape than the salmon. But if you agree with me that the skill displayed by the roach-fisher is, in its way as much to be admired as that exhibited by the salmon-fisher, I will gladly grant that the salmon-fisher has the advantage in respect of the splendid exercise his favourite sport enables him to enjoy, the lovely scenery through which it takes him, and the glorious battles which every now and again he wages with the king of fresh-water fish.

To come to the more practical portions of my subject, roach swim in shoals varying from a dozen to an uncountable number, and usually feed close to the bottom. There are, broadly speaking, two methods of fishing on or near the bottom for roach: first, with float tackle; second, with leger tackle. Both plans are capable of many variations, and occasionally the two are combined. The exact method to be followed depends on the time of year and the character of the swim, the skilful angler varying his tackle accordingly. In ordinary float-fishing from the bank, either the light rod with the extra butt—mentioned on page 13—can be used, or the rods made specially for the purpose (see p. 14). If the angler fishes

in the Nottingham fashion, or with the leger, the light rod, without the extra butt, will be found to answer the purpose admirably; but Nottingham anglers use light wood rods, made expressly for their peculiar kind of fishing. Personally, I am not wedded to either the Nottingham style or any other, but always use Nottingham reels and lines (see pp. 16 and 17), so that I can fish any way I like; and when I fail with one plan, I try another.

Let us now go for a summer day's roach-fishing, during which I will do my best to explain how to find the fish, and the various ways of catching them. By following this plan I believe I shall be able to give all the necessary information in a readable and easily-understood form.

It is the end of July, and the roach are now in condition. We are going to a stream which is new to us, so devote a portion of the previous day to getting ready various baits which we may possibly require. In the first place, we prepare about half a pint of wheat for bait, by placing it in a large covered jar, full of cold water, in the oven, and letting it stew gently from three to five hours, adding *cold* water about once an hour, as the wheat quickly takes up the water, and it is important not to let it dry. The wheat can hardly cook too slowly. If prepared with care, it swells up to about the size of a pea and bursts, showing a little streak of white. If done too much, the inside boils out. The empty husks are not much use as bait. Of course, there are many methods of stewing wheat, but the jar-in-oven plan is the safest.* Instead of wheat, we can use lightly-dried malt—which is sometimes preferred by the roach—or pearl barley. A bait more used for roach than any other (paste excepted) is the gentle—larva of the bluebottle fly. We purchase a store of these from an obliging butcher's assistant, who, by keeping them in bran or damp sand for a few days, in a dark, cool place—a cellar for preference—has caused them to become clean and pleasant to use. Some few anglers

* Another good method is to soak the wheat for twelve hours, rub it in a coarse canvas bag until the husks are removed, and then stew the remainder of the grain very gently in milk. Another plan is to place a bag of wheat in a mash-tub for a few hours.

believe that gentles are more attractive to the fish when fresh from feeding on putrid flesh, but I much prefer them well scoured.

It is the easiest possible thing to raise a stock of gentles in summer, but residents in town are advised not to make the attempt. A piece of bullock's liver, or a dead fish or rat, hung up in a warm, shady place out of doors, out of the way of cats, quickly attracts crowds of blow-flies. In one or two days the thing will be sufficiently "blown." It should then be placed on some sand, in an earthenware pan with a glazed interior, or in an old lard tin, kept in the shade, and covered with a piece of wire netting, to keep off cats, dogs, and rats. In warm weather the gentles may be almost seen to grow. As they eat the stuff they are bred in, fresh food should be given them, or they quickly turn into the chrysalis state, and are then not much use.* Those required for baiting the hooks can be kept in bran or sand for a few days, and some nicely scoured ones are generally to be found in the sand at the bottom of the pan. Scoured gentles keep longest in a cellar or other cool, dark place. The sides of the pan have to be kept quite dry, or the gentles will crawl out. To keep gentles in winter two plans are adopted: The first is to half fill a good sized tub with damp sand or garden loam, get some liver, fly-blown, as late in the year as possible, and lay the liver on the top of the soil. The pan should be placed in a dark place, and the gentles be well fed on anything in the nature of meat. Many of them will bury themselves in the soil. The other plan, which is less trouble, but hardly so effective, is to cork up full-grown gentles in a bottle full of garden soil, and bury the bottle until wanted.

Well, our wheat is boiled and gentles scoured; but to be on the safe side, we get from the stable-boy a few redworms, which, in anticipation of our visit, he obtained from a very old dungheap, and has kept for three days in damp moss to scour. Before going to bed we put in soak any old crusts that are in the bread-pan, and perhaps prevail on the cook to boil us a teacupful of rice,

* Dace are more partial to the chrysalis than roach. A compound bait—gentle on shank, and chrysalis on point of hook—is sometimes successful.

to add to the attractiveness of our ground-bait. We also take a glance through Chapter II. of this book, and make up some float tackle, but leave a good deal to be finally arranged until we reach the water's side, for, having never fished this particular river, we hardly know its character and the tackle we shall want.

The following morning we are up at daybreak, and find our man, John, busy at work on the ground-bait. The basinful of soaked bread he has thoroughly emptied of water, and, after squeezing the crusts, has rubbed them into *very small* fragments. To the bread he adds the boiled rice, a few handfuls of meal, and with some bran works up the mixture into stiff balls. (N.B.—The bread and bran alone make excellent ground-bait; or bread, bran, and clay; or even bran and clay.) The dog-cart is now at the door, and into it go our impedimenta, which consist of creel, landing-net and handle, light rod with extra butt (see page 13), our tackle-book, containing on a winder two or three made-up lines (see page 25), some 2yd. lengths of very fine gut and brown horsehair, and a few dozen No. 9 to No. 12 Crystal and Round Bend hooks, some with shanks painted white, others red (see page 20). Two or three light, quill floats, of various sizes, also find a place in our creel; and we must by no means forget the plummet, the disgorger, our bait-box containing gentles, the worm-bag, a large slice of bread and a crust (both from a stale loaf, or a French roll, which is excellent for making paste), the wheat in a bag, and the ground-bait also in a large bag. We put in a duster, to wipe our hands upon if we catch any fish and have to unhook them ourselves. We have prepared no less than four kinds of bait, because we do not know the water, nor what baits are likely to take best. One of us has some peculiar paste all to himself, and greatly believes in its killing powers. It is made simply of flour, a little sugar, and vermilion, mixed up with gin into a stiff paste. In some waters it kills well.

After the sultry night—during which we lay awake for the most part, excited by some talk of mighty fish, which we had listened to after dinner—the drive through the cool air of early morning, between the hedges bediamonded with dewdrops

and smelling sweetly of wild honeysuckle, is very enjoyable. There is no wind, but a few clouds in the South give us promise of a shower or two during the day. The nine miles and a half from the house to the river are covered in something under the hour, and, almost before we know it, we are standing knee deep in rich meadow grass, putting our rods together. The ferrules of the rods we always keep rubbed with vaseline or soft soap, or any kind of grease, to prevent them sticking. On the butt of the rod we fix the small Nottingham winch (see page 16), with the handles to the right when the reel is hanging below the rod, and we draw the fine twisted or plaited silk line through the rod rings. Being so far ready, the next thing to do is

To Find a Swim—a subject on which a good-sized volume might easily be written. The river is, let us say, about 30yds. wide, slow flowing, with here and there reed beds and islands. About a mile above us is a weir and mill, and the same distance below us the river is also dammed up about 4ft. for the purpose of turning another mill. If we walk down stream, we shall find the water get deeper; if we walk up stream, we are certain to find it more shallow. What we require is a swim from 5ft. to 10ft. deep, so near the bank as to be fishable with our 15ft. rods—a swim where the bottom is of gravel or sand, and level for a few yards, and where weeds or reeds, or both, grow in the immediate neighbourhood. It should also be *out of the wind* for if the surface of the water is ruffled, many of the largest fish will be missed, as they bite most gently, hardly moving the float. Above all, there must be some stream, for at this season we do not find roach in still water, except it be in a lake, canal, or pond. Where we stand the river widens out, and a mudbank, on which weeds grow luxuriantly, stretches out some 20ft. from the shore. If we had a boat we might find a gravelly bottom on the edge of the weeds, but we have to walk farther before we can fish from the bank. About half a mile up stream I espy a good-sized eyot, and I know from experience that where the river is thus divided the stream often runs sharply on both sides of it, and cuts a clean channel close into the banks, thus forming an easily reached swim. Besides, fish always lie about such spots,

one reason, no doubt, being that in case of a flood there is a safe place for them in the eddy always to be found at the tail of an island.

We soon arrive opposite the eyot. The bank on which we stand is steep, and there is probably a good depth of water close under it. At one point a few reeds grow, then comes a gap, then a few more reeds. Between the two reed-beds is just the place for roach, if only the depth and bottom are suitable for float-fishing. To test the swim, I attach the float tackle, shown on page 25, to the end of my running line, fasten a plummet to the hook, and let it into the water. The plummet sinks sharply, and hits the ground with a knock—the bottom is good. With a very little practice the difference between a mud and a hard bottom can thus be easily determined, unless the water is very deep. For plumbing in deep water anglers sometimes scoop a hollow in the bottom of the plummet, and fill it with tallow, to which the sand, gravel, or mud, as the case may be, sticks. The depth I find to be about 6ft., and by plumbing at three different spots, a yard apart, I find that the bottom is fairly level. All this while I have been careful not to show myself more than is necessary, and pursue my investigations very quietly; neither have I shaken the bank by heavy footfalls. The sun is in my face, so that my shadow is not thrown into the water. While I was taking the line off the winder I stood some distance back from the river, and it was not until my float tackle was fastened on to the running line that I sat on my basket, just opposite the top of the swim, and commenced to plumb the depth. While thus examining the swim, I was careful to do what is usually the first operation in float-fishing, namely, adjust my float to a proper distance from the hook. As a general rule, when the plummet is on the bottom, and—the line being held taut—the top of the float is just level with the surface of the water, the float is in its right place on the line. Unfortunately, the swim is deeper lower down than it is opposite to me, so I had to put my float higher up the line; for it is much more important to have the right depth in the middle and end of the swim than at the commencement. Before commencing to fish I take a wooden lucifer match, split it in half, and tie a small portion of it on to the running line, about

5ft. above the float (see Fig. 19). After my hook is baited I shall wind up my line until the reel is stopped by the match catching against the top ring. By this means the line will be kept from falling into loops between the top ring and the reel,



FIG. 19. TIGHT-LINE FISHING WITH RUNNING TACKLE BY MEANS OF A LUCIFER MATCH.

and I shall be enabled to strike much sharper than I could if there was any slack line between the rings. Only very careful anglers adopt this plan. The next thing is

Baiting the Hook.—I begin by using gentles. The hook is a small one—about No. 10 Crystal Bend, with the shank painted white (see page 20)—and on it I draw two gentles, not threading them on from head to tail, but catching them by a small piece of skin on the side. (When I have many bites, but few fish, I sometimes put on a No. 13 hook, and attach by the tail a large gentle, which wriggles as it goes down the stream, and sometimes proves very killing.) I then take a trial swim, dropping my tackle very carefully and lightly into the water, to see if the bottom is clear.* If the bottom is foul my hook catches, and my float is forced under by the current; but this swim is clear, and, laying down my rod, I leave my tackle in the water to soak while I prepare my ground-bait. If I had been acquainted with this swim, I should have thrown in some ground-bait before baiting my hook, but not before plumbing the depth.

With regard to hook-baits for roach, those really required are paste, gentles, and worms; one of these three will kill almost anywhere and at any time. But it is as well to know that some other baits are, on occasions, equally killing, namely, wasp-grubs (baked in the oven, or boiled in milk), caddis (the larvæ of various water-flies, easily found in ditches), boiled wheat or pearl barley, the white portions of greaves boiled, and blow-flies used under water. A few weeks ago a friend persuaded me to try earwigs. I did so, and found them kill

* If an otherwise good roach-swim is spoilt by a few weeds, the vigorous use of a gudgeon-rake (see Chap. VIII.), a few hours before the swim is fished, will vastly improve the swim by clearing away weeds and rubbish.

rather better than any other bait we were using. That happened in the Loddon. (See also page 49.)

To return to the riverside. I find my man has made up

The Ground-bait in rather large balls, so I break a lump in half, make a hole in the centre, put in a dozen gentles, and squeeze it up into a ball about the size of an egg. If I am very anxious to catch fish, I do not throw this ball in, as most anglers do, and make a splash which frightens the timid roach, but squeeze it on my line, just above the hook, swing it out over the water, and let it sink gently to the bottom. As soon as its journey has ended, I raise the point of the rod, and jerk the hook out of the ball of bait. My float and bait then travel down the stream, my two gentles appear a part of the ground-bait, and I very likely get a fish the first swim.

To be able to judge when the ground-bait reaches the bottom is very important, for the angler who fishes in one place, while his ground-bait is in another, catches few fish. *The hook-bait should always travel right over, and in a line with, the ground-bait.* I know no plan which enables the angler to judge more correctly just where the ground-bait falls than the one I have described. Three small balls of ground-bait should be dropped in at starting, and, unless the roach are biting very fast, a piece about a quarter the size after every three fish are taken. If the stream is strong, it will be necessary to put a stone inside each ball to make it sink; while, on the other hand, if there is hardly any stream, the ground-bait may be thrown in loose, not made into balls at all. It is not desirable for the ground-bait to fall just opposite the angler, for it is as well to keep the fish a little distance off. The nearer the fish are, the worse they feed. One great point in successful bottom fishing is to mix up with the ground-bait some of whatever is used on the hook. If a lot of bread and bran is being eaten by the fish, the more experienced of them will view with suspicion a solitary couple of gentles; but if to the bread and bran some gentles are added, then the fish feed on bread, bran, and gentles as a matter of course, and probably take the two in which the hook is partially hidden. When I have been ground-baiting with soaked crusts and bran, and have

been fishing with gentles, but have had so few of these latter that I could not add any to the ground-bait, I have often met with poor success until I tried as hook-bait a fragment of inner crust (*broken*, not cut, off the loaf), which, of course, resembled a piece of the ground-bait as nearly as possible.

Having put in three balls of ground-bait, each with a few gentles inside, I begin fishing. The tackle is dropped into the water just in front of me, and allowed to pass quietly down with the stream. I am careful to neither check the float nor let any line lie on the surface of the water. When the float has gone as far as the line will allow, I lift it out of the water with a *slight* turn of the wrist, which would cause any fish that might be holding on to the bait at the end of the swim to be hooked. I repeat the process—not a bite! and I take four swims before anything happens. The roach, probably, are not there, but they may come yet, for the shoals do not remain stationary when on the feed. In the middle of the fifth swim I notice that my float is checked for an instant. Before it can go under I give a slight upward movement of the wrist, and at once feel I have something on, and I have the pleasure of playing and landing the fish.

It should be stated, as regards roach-bites, that the angler cannot strike too soon. Large roach do not, as a rule (they do sometimes), bite boldly. They are so cautious in taking the bait that often only the slightest movement of the float is discernible. If a roach goes off with the bait, the float of course goes under, but the roach immediately leaves go on feeling the pull of the float, and the angler strikes too late. If the float is only checked a little, or inclines to one side or the other, the angler should strike. Mind, I am talking of large, shy, river roach, not of the hungry little fellows who would swallow rod, angler, and all, if their stomachs were only as large as their appetites. Half the secret of successful roach-fishing lies in the strike, and on this portion of the subject I can usefully add nothing more, for the art of striking can only be learnt by practice. An experienced roach-fisher will detect bites when a beginner would see no sign of movement in the float. As a rule, the farther the angler is from the fish the bolder they bite.

Well, I have hooked my first fish, so now proceed to play him. He is of some size, for he makes for the centre of the river, and forces me to allow him to run several yards of line off my reel. I have to keep an even strain on his mouth, never slacking the line an instant, and to play him without disturbing the other fish, and I endeavour to keep him near the top of the water without breaking the surface. If he played near the bottom, the shoal of roach might take warning by the fate of their brother, and if he kicked about on the surface they would also be startled. In trout-fishing it is usual to play the fish down stream, and with good reason; but seated on my creel, I am obliged to bring this roach up stream, as far away from the swim as I can reach. As soon as he appears exhausted with his struggles, I raise the point of the rod, *letting out some line** off the reel, and, holding the rod in my left hand, and my landing-net in my right hand, bring him close under the bank. Then I *sink my landing-net*, bring the fish over it, raise the net, and fish No. 1 is caught. During the next quarter of an hour I catch five fish, but as they run small I determine to try

Wheat as a Bait, and failing that, paste, for I have noticed that in some rivers very few large roach take gentles, while dozens of small fish may be caught on that bait. The first thing to do is to change my hook for an ordinary No. 11 Round Bend one, the shank of which has been painted white. The gut on which the new hook is whipped is curly, and I first moisten it in my mouth, and then draw it out straight. Persons—and there are a few—who never acquire the knack of straightening gut should carry a fragment of pure india-rubber in their pocket. Gut rubbed with indiarubber quickly loses its curly properties. Cobbler's heelball is useful for the same purpose. Well, the hook is on, and before putting,

* Thames and Lea roach-fishers usually angle with what is termed a tight line—i.e., without running tackle. When landing fish, they have simply to remove the butt of the rod, or, if the swim is shallow, the second joint, when they can easily bring the fish to the landing-net. The only objection I can see to using running tackle with a long, roach rod, is that to land the fish without being able to shorten the rod is a little inconvenient. I have, however, sometimes seen bank-anglers, when they were using running tackle, remove their butts when landing fish, and I have occasionally done the same thing after playing the fish nearly dead.

or throwing, the used hook away, I carefully notice if the gut on the new hook is the same length as the gut on the old one, and if there is any difference, I shift my float accordingly. A slight change in the ground-bait is necessary, for I want to get the fish to look upon wheat as a very proper and safe food. This view they will not take if they simply see the grain on my hook. I therefore break up some ground-bait, and make up three small balls, mixing in as much wheat as I can. The ground-bait I let in gently by means of my line as before, and I also throw in from time to time a dozen or more grains of wheat some yards above my swim, so that they reach the bottom at the spot where I am fishing. For my hook I select a plump, full grain, just bursting its shell, and put the hook point in at one end of the white streak, and just out at the other, so that, immediately I strike, the point of the hook catches the fish's mouth. To cover the point with the husk of the grain is fatal to success. Sometimes, when the wheat is badly cooked, and the inside is almost boiled out, I am obliged to put the hook point into the husk; but even then I am careful that the point comes through. Sometimes two grains answer better than one, and when the fish are shy it is an admirable plan—one I have followed for some years—to thread a gentle up the shank of the hook, and cover the bend with a grain of wheat.

When roach are very plentiful, or a shoal is in some hole which it has no inclination to leave, the throwing in of a few grains well above the swim, every few minutes, serves quite as well to keep the fish together, and on the feed, as the more elaborate ground-bait. On the best day's roach-fishing I ever had in my life my hook-bait was wheat, and my ground-bait also wheat, thrown in loose. A great many skilful anglers use brewers' grains as ground-bait when fishing with wheat, but I much prefer the plan just described.

About nine o'clock the roach suddenly cease to feed, and after trying various little dodges without success, I come to the conclusion that either their feeding-time is over for the morning, or that there is

A Jack in the Swim.—Jack, or pike, eat roach, and in

summer usually have their lairs in weeds and reed-beds, so that the corner where I am fishing is a particularly likely place for one of these fish. To put the matter to the test, I fix the joints of my second rod together (see page 13), and not having proper jack tackle with me, I tie my plummet on to the end of the running line, and a foot above the plummet tie on a hook, mounted on gimp, which is fortunately in my book. My last fish happened to be small, and is still alive, so I put the hook through both its lips, and drop it into the water, close to the reeds. "I will give the jack five minutes," I think to myself, "and meanwhile there is time for a pipe." However, before my pipe is even out of my pocket I see a shaking of the line, followed by a downward movement of the rod-top. I wait a second, then up with the point, hold on for a moment, to get the hook well in, and I am playing a fine Jack of half a dozen pounds. "No wonder the roach were frightened," think I, as he comes to the top, and opens his ugly mouth at me. Not for a moment must I let the line slack. All through must an even pressure be kept on the fish's mouth. Soon he tires, and my landing-net is brought into requisition. There is not much chance of roach for half an hour after this disturbance, so shifting my quarters, and espying a suitable swim, I do a little

Nottingham Fishing.—I am now going to fish some distance from the bank—about 25ft. out—and the water is somewhat heavier than in my other swim. Slightly heavier tackle is therefore necessary, so I take a larger set of float tackle off my winder—that is to say, tackle with more shot and a larger float. Another reason for preferring heavier tackle is that its weight renders it easier to cast. When changing tackles, I leave the first tackle on the grass, near my old swim, and am careful not to move the float, so that when I return there will be no occasion to plumb the depth for a second time. I also remove the piece of match from my line, and shorten the rod by taking off the extra butt. The depth of the new swim has now to be discovered. To use the plummet here is impossible. Of course I put the float as near as I can guess at the depth, rather higher than lower, and cast out my tackle baited with

gentles—the hook point *covered*—to the top of the swim. The float cocks, goes on its way down stream for a few feet, then bobs several times, and finally goes under. From this I know that my bait is touching the bottom, but that my shots are off the bottom; for if they touched the ground, the float would not cock, but would lie in a horizontal position on the water. I am therefore not more on the bottom than the distance between the shot and the hook, so I lower my float about 4in., and try another swim. This time the float goes serenely to its journey's end. I may now be too far off the bottom, so I heighten the float 2in. Again the tackle passes down the swim without incident, and I know that I am within 2in. of the right depth, which is near enough. I hope I have made this plumbing-without-a-plummet matter quite clear. It is, though troublesome, a very simple operation, and one which must be understood and practised. Success in bottom fishing depends a great deal on having the bait at the proper depth.

I have said "cast out the tackle," but I may very properly be asked, how. With heavy floats and many shot the line runs off the reel as the tackle is cast out, but with this light roach-tackle a different plan must be adopted. Face the swim; look rather up stream than down; hold the rod in the right hand, with that hand above the reel and the little finger touching the rim of the reel, to act as a check.* Point the rod up stream, pull some line off the reel, and catch the loop on a finger of the left hand (Fig. 20, 1). From the point of the rod to the hook, the length should be from 6ft. to 8ft., according to the depth of the swim. At greater depths a slider float (see page 26) is used. These details so far carried out, move the right hand backwards, bringing the point of the rod away from the river; then move it quickly forward, and swing the tackle out in the direction of the swim. As the tackle reaches the end of its swing, just before it is checked, let the line off the finger

* A great many Nottingham anglers check the reel with the first finger, the hand being, of course, below the reel. Casting from the right shoulder, they place the right hand above the reel and the left hand below it, and check the reel with the first finger of the left hand; casting from the left shoulder, the hands are reversed, and the reel is checked with the first finger of the right hand. Personally, I prefer to always have my right hand above the reel, and to keep the little finger of that hand on the rim of the reel.

of the left hand, and away the tackle shoots over the river, and alights at the top of the swim. This is for a short cast. No. 2 in the illustration indicates how the line should be held for an extra long cast. Two loops have then to be held in the left hand (one on the first finger, the other on the second finger), and the higher loop has to be released a second before the one next the reel. I sometimes even take three loops into my left

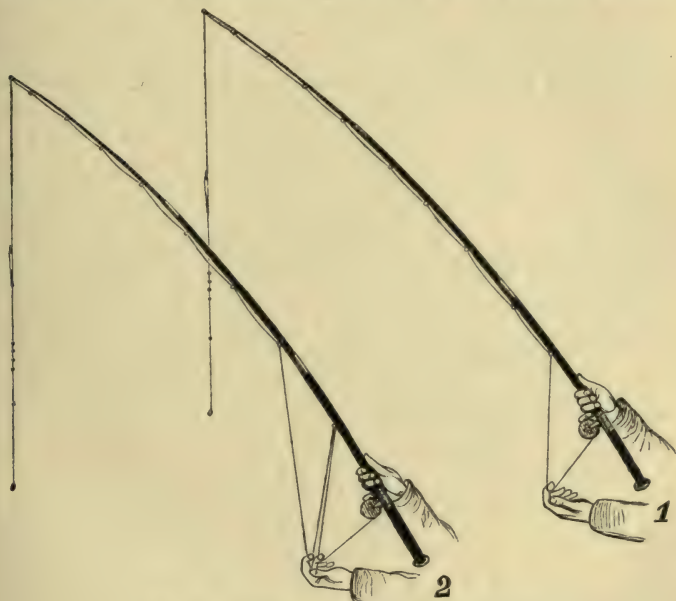


FIG. 20. CASTING IN THE NOTTINGHAM STYLE.

hand; but to cast with more than one requires a good deal of practice. Not a few Nottingham fishermen pull out the loops of line from between rings about the middle of the rod, but I believe the plan shown in the sketch to be the most handy.

As soon as the tackle touches the water the point of the rod is lowered, but immediately the float has cocked, line is let out, and the rod is held at an angle of about 45deg. Light

float tackle, as it goes down the stream, will draw the fine line through the rings, but will not pull it off the reel, so the reel has to be turned with the hand; but when rather heavy tackle is used, in deep, quick streams, the arrangement works automatically. When the float has travelled about 10yds., the line is wound in and a fresh cast made. If the day is wet, I do anything rather than fish in the Nottingham style, for the fine, undressed silk line clings to the rod, the float gets checked, the fish, in consequence, scared, and the angler's temper ruffled.*

As I am going to fish with wheat, I attach a small ball of ground-bait, loaded with wheat, to my hook, and swing it to the top of the swim, and from time to time throw in a few grains of wheat. At the second swim I take a fish, and continue to have good sport for half an hour. Then the roach get shy, and as an experiment I throw some wheat in lower down the swim, and let my float travel 5yds. farther than it did before, or 15yds. in all. By throwing in my ground-bait lower, I get the fish to feed farther away from me, and the result is that, though the sun is now well up over my head, they bite less shyly, and I bring some more to basket. About midday I stroll towards my companions, with a view of learning when and where we are to lunch, and discover one of them busily engaged in

"Tight-corking," or Legering with a Float, by which means he has caught fewer, but finer, roach than I have. I use the expression "tight-corking," but it does not exactly express what my friend is doing, for he is using a quill, not a cork, float, and in lieu of the shot which Nottingham tight-corkers (this is the first time I ever spoke of anybody

* Anglers of the Thames and Lea, and of the Trent, all assert that their respective styles are best. In this they are incorrect, and the "all-round" angler will do well to adopt the method best suited to any particular swim. The Thames and Lea style is best adapted for quiet swims, moderately deep, near the bank, where the angler can sit well back, out of sight of the fish. In a shallow, swift swim, the rod in the Lea style being held just over the roach, would act as a scarecrow. In such swims the Trent or Nottingham method should be followed. In the Thames and Lea style, the angler can on a calm day detect the slightest bite, and instantly strike, and in a swim suited to that style of fishing catches four roach to the Nottingham angler's one; but not so in shallow, swift streams.

as a "tight-corker") put on their lines, he uses a small bullet, which can slip *up* the line, but is prevented from going *down* it by a very small shot, bitten 18in. or more above the hook. His plan of working this tackle is very similar to that followed by the aforesaid tight-corkers. Need I explain that tight-corking is sending float tackle down stream to a certain point, and there checking it, a foot or more of gut being on the bottom (see also page 78). My friend's method is, as I said, similar, but better. He chose a swim where the bottom was very uneven, and where the stream, owing to a prominence in the bank, set out a little, and formed a small eddy. The eddy was almost full of water lilies, and



FIG. 21. FISHING WITH LEGER FLOAT TACKLE ON EDGE OF EDDY.

just on the edge of the stream, about 2ft. from the lilies, he cast in his tackle and waited patiently for results. When plumbing the depth, he so arranged the float that the distance from the float to the bullet was a few inches more than the distance from the surface of the water to the bottom. The depth was about 8ft.; had it been more, he would have been obliged to use a slider float (see page 26). A glance at the sketch (Fig. 21) will give a fairly good idea of the position of the tackle. My friend's bait is a good-sized lump of paste, which he is careful to mould on to the hook (a short-shanked No. 6 Round Bend) in such a way that the point comes through with the slightest touch (see Fig. 22).

The shank of the hook is painted white, so that it will not be noticeable should the paste get washed away. This paste is made at the waterside, in a simple fashion, by wetting a portion of the crumb of a stale loaf, or French roll, and then well squeezing it in a handkerchief and kneading it. When made, it is best kept in a damp rag, and not exposed to the light, or it turns a drab colour. If made at home, it is as well to pound it in a pestle and mortar. The ground-bait is the bread-and-bran mixture similar to that which I was using. None is thrown in, but as often as may be necessary a small lump is pressed round a very small shot on the line, about 4in. from the hook, so that when the affair is let into the water the hook-bait is certain to lie close to the ground-bait—no small advantage.* Every few minutes my friend throws in a small pellet of paste well above his float, so that it may sink as near his bait as he can judge. His method is eminently adapted to catch big fish. He can keep very quiet, takes the line out of the water only when he has a bite or a fish, fishes close to his ground-bait, and almost immediately above his hook, and there is no line and row of shots as there is in the float tackle I have been using. Truly an admirable method! After watching my friend land a couple of "whoppers," we have lunch together, and I return to my old swim, from which the roach had been frightened by the jack. The sun now comes out strongly, and the fish soon cease feeding, so I again join my friend, and we stroll up the river until we come to a weir, on the shallows below which are two anglers, both of whom are catching roach. One is fly-fishing with a good-sized red palmer, and catches not only roach (which in a few rivers will take a fly),† but also chub and dace. The other we find is using



FIG. 22. HOOK
BAITED WITH
PASTE.

Silk Weed (*Conferva rivularis*), crow silk, or flannel weed,

* Some anglers who use this tackle omit the ground-bait on the line, and place a fragment of cork a couple of inches above the hook. This keeps the bait off the bottom, which is occasionally an advantage.

† See account of "Fly-fishing for Rudd," Chapter XII. The method is similar.

a very killing bait in the hot months. He has taken his station at the side of the weir, where he can reach a quiet eddy. The depth is about 8ft., and the stream is so slight that he is able to fish without shots. To make his float cock, he has simply twisted a short length of lead wire round the end of it (self-cocking floats are sold ready weighted). His line is of the finest-drawn gut, and the shank of his hook (No. 9) is coloured green by means of green sealing-wax dissolved in spirits of wine. With his landing-net handle he has rubbed off a few bits of the weed from the weir, and, after washing it well, winds small pieces round his hook. He tells us that the larger the bait, the larger the fish he takes, and he certainly has some fine specimens in his creel. He says the silk weed is a better bait near weirs than elsewhere, probably because it is natural for the fish to find pieces of the weed in such places. "I often cut open roach to find out on what they are feeding," he adds, "and all the fish I catch in the weir-pool are stuffed with this weed." We have a long chat with this angler, who is an enthusiast, and he tells us of several baits to try when the ordinary ones fail; among others, caddis, mealworms—especially good in mill-tails—small cubes of banana, fresh-water shrimps, dried sheep's blood, and small cubes of boiled pork—the last two as winter baits.

Our conversation is put an end to by the appearance of the keeper, who tells us that he has a punt, which he will gladly place at our disposal if we feel inclined to do a little

Punt-fishing in the Thames Style.—He further offers to take us to a first-rate pitch where the fish, which run large, have not seen a line this season. The offer is too tempting to be refused; we are soon on board our flat-bottomed craft, which is divided into two unequal portions by what is termed a well—i.e., a division into which the water flows freely, used for holding live-baits for jack, trout, and perch. The well is placed about one-third of the way from the stern, and on each side of it is a comfortable Windsor chair.

In due course we come to the promised swim, and see at a glance that it is a good one. At this point the river is very weedy, but just in the centre is a narrow run, not quite as

deep as the punt is long. By the grate of the punt pole we can hear that the bottom is sandy gravel. The keeper takes great pains not to disturb the fish while moving the punt. Just before arriving at the swim he lets the punt swing across the stream, over the weeds on the left hand, and going up into the bows, takes a very heavy pole, called a rypeck, pointed with iron, and drives it into the bottom, at the point A (Fig. 23). As he does so, the punt swings round into the position shown in the first diagram. As soon as one pole is in he takes up another, drops it gently overboard, on the left side, about the middle, and pushes the punt across and rather up stream, the pole A, of course, coming nearly to the stern of the punt, where



FIG. 23. MOORING A THAMES PUNT.

my friend fastens it with a piece of cord. In the meantime the punt swings at right angles to the stream, the second pole is fixed in at the point B, and tied at the end of the bows.*

After the punt is moored, my companion and I remain quietly on our Windsor chairs, and the keeper takes his seat between us, on the lid of the well. By his direction we put our floats (we are using our light rods, without the extra butt) 6ft. or so from the hook, and then plumb the depth. Having done so as quietly as possible, we find

* In the Eastern Counties the boat or punt is usually moored down, and not across, the stream; the anglers then sit facing the opposite bank of the river, and are, as regards the stream, in the same position as they would be on the bank.

we have to shift the float only a few inches higher up the line. I should say that, the stream here being rather swift, we have put on larger floats, which carry more shot, and by the keeper's advice we place one very small shot about 6in. above the hook. As soon as we have the depth, the keeper takes two balls of our ground-bait, squeezes a small stone into the middle of each, and puts them overboard, exactly in a line with me, and two more in a line with my companion. He then baits our hooks with two gentles, and the fun begins. We drop the tackle in close to the punt, and are very particular to let as little line fall on the water as possible. At the end of each swim we strike gently, sometimes by this means hooking a cautious roach, which is holding the bait in its mouth without moving the float.

After a while, the roach we are catching not running as large as the keeper led us to expect, I determine to try creed wheat (see page 33), but before doing so throw in a few handfuls of wheat, as far behind me up stream as I can. By the time the current sweeps these grains into our swim they are almost on the bottom, and the fish are feeding on them. I now bait carefully with a grain of wheat, and catch several roach of better size than those which took the gentles. As soon as they go off the feed, I throw in a few more grains, well up stream, and bring them on again. My friend continues fishing with gentles, and is much annoyed by a shoal of bleak—little fish not unlike sprats—which will not let his bait alone, and prevent the roach from taking it. To get rid of these little pests we first throw in some loose bran; but this not having the effect (it often succeeds), we throw a few pieces of dry bread on to the water, and these the bleak follow and leave us in peace.

Before we leave the pitch I determine to try whether, as frequently happens, there are not some big, cautious fellows lying just below our swim, nipping up the few fragments of ground-bait which the smaller and more eager fry allow to escape. To put the matter to the test, I have only to move the button at the back of my reel, which at once becomes free running. I am thus able to fish in the Nottingham

style, and let my float travel for about 15yds. However, before the magic quill has gone 2yds. beyond the limit of our former swim, it commences to go under. I strike sharply, before it has disappeared, and the keeper has the satisfaction of landing the roach of the day, a fine fat fellow, weighing 1½lb. Evening is now coming on, and having a drive before us, and certain social engagements, the rypecks are lifted, and the keeper poles us back to the weir. Here we meet with an old friend, who has come to pass a couple of hours

Legering for Roach.—He is extremely clever at this branch of the sport, and catches none but big fish. He uses a very fine, dressed silk line, a leger made out of 3yds. of fine gut (stained below the lead a light brown with coffee lees), a small leger lead, a No. 6 short-shanked, Round Bend hook, and three shot. The first shot—a large one—he places 3in. from the hook, the second 3ft. farther up the gut; then comes the leger lead, and the third shot 1ft. above the second. The lead, of course, slides up and down between the two upper shots. The shot next the hook is only placed there to keep the ground-bait in its place; in fact, the tackle is almost the same as in Fig. 21, minus the float. Both hook-bait and ground-bait are merely fine flour and a little fine bran, made up into very stiff dough. A piece nearly as big as a small marble is put on the hook, and a piece as large as a small orange round the lowest shot. The fish come about the ground-bait, and one of the largest, noticing a fine lump—a good mouthful, and no more—lying by the side of the larger piece, takes it into its mouth; and if the angler *feels* what has happened, he strikes, and master roach quits the river for ever. My friend fishes only by the side of the lasher in weir-pools, where float tackle would be no use, and does great execution in this way during the summer months; but of course this tackle can be used in other swims. Leaving our friend fishing, we pack up our traps, mount the dog-cart, and our pleasant day's roach-fishing, during which we have tried or seen tried nearly, if not quite, all the known methods of taking these fish in summer, is at an end.

Roach-fishing in High and Coloured Water.—One or other of the methods which I have described will always take roach in summer, if the fish are to be caught at all; and the instructions I have given should suffice upon all occasions from June to October, unless the water is very high, or coloured. With regard to these last-mentioned conditions, I would ask the reader to refer to Chapter I., pages 7 and 8, where he will find related the peculiar effect colour in the water has on the movements of most fish. Immediately the water thickens, the fish go into shallower swims; and when the water of a river has been so heavily charged with mud as to be all but opaque, I have known roach taken in swims only a foot deep. When the water is merely stained, I think the best bait is a gentle or redworm; but directly it gets into a pea-soupy condition, the best bait is the tail of a well-scoured lobworm, worked, either on ordinary float tackle or on leger with or without a float, close into the bank, in from 1ft. to 3ft. of water. It is best to let the worm lie on the bottom. Drinking-places for cattle will be sometimes found to yield good roach when the water is muddy—and perch too, for the matter of that. One advantage of the leger is that no plumbing the depth is required. When the swim one has to fish is only 24in. deep, and perhaps not a yard square, the act of plumbing the depth will as likely as not drive all the fish out into the stream.

The hook commonly used for a lobworm is a No. 2 long-shanked, Round Bend; and if it is one of the Marston sliced hooks (see page 21), so much the better. My favourite hook, or rather arrangement of hooks, for the tail of a lobworm, is known as Stewart tackle (see Fig. 24). I find it hooks the roach with more certainty than any other arrangement. The hooks should be tied on with red silk, and the binding varnished. This gives a brownish red, which approaches the colour of the worm, and is better than red paint. Some years ago I thought I had invented a great improvement on this



FIG. 24.
STEWART
TACKLE.

tackle (see Fig. 25); in theory it was much better, but in practice I found no advantage. Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell advises the use of this tackle in one of his works, and, like myself

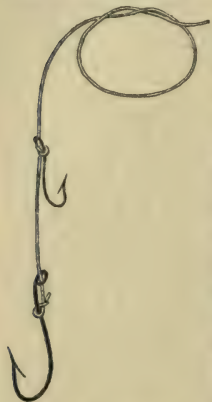


FIG. 25. MODIFIED STEWART TACKLE.

—and, no doubt, many other anglers—invented it. The worm is threaded from the middle to the tail on the lower *hook*, and the head is caught on the top hook. In the illustration the tackle is shown made with eyed hooks—a wrinkle worth remembering, and likely to be useful to fly-fishers who want to change to the worm, and have not any suitable tackle. The lower hook is tied on with the Turle knot illustrated on page 21. Fig. 26 shows the ordinary Stewart tackle baited. The points of the hooks may show quite plainly. In fact, long experience has proved that it is quite unnecessary to cover the hooks; they need only be stuck through the worm. To bait a single hook for roach, the half of a

small lobworm, or the third of a large one, should be threaded on the hook, the point being put in at the broken end, and brought up nearly to the tail. The operation is a horrid one, but is rendered less beastly if the angler holds the worm in a duster. In any case, he should have a tin of silver sand or sawdust at his side, and dip the worm and his fingers in this before baiting the hook. The worm dies quickly if threaded on a single hook; more quickly than on Stewart tackle—a disadvantage to the angler, but not to the worm. Worms may not be very sensitive, but they must object to being threaded.



FIG. 26. STEWART TACKLE BAITED.

Ground-baiting with Worms for Roach.—Success with the lob-

worm, or, rather, with the roach, depends in a very great measure on the skilful distribution of whole or broken

up* worms along the swim. Our bread-and-bran mixture is of little or no use when we fish with the tail of a lob. The one ground-bait now is worms, which have to be thrown in loose and with much judgment, for it is no easy matter to place them so that they sink to the bottom close to the hook-bait. When ground-baiting with worms, we have to keep in mind the depth of the water and the speed of the stream. The swifter and deeper the stream, the higher above the swim must the worms be thrown. No two eddies are exactly alike, but the sketch of a small one which is given in Fig. 27 will, I hope, convey some idea of the best way to throw in the ground-bait in such spots. To fish with float tackle, the angler should stand at C, drop

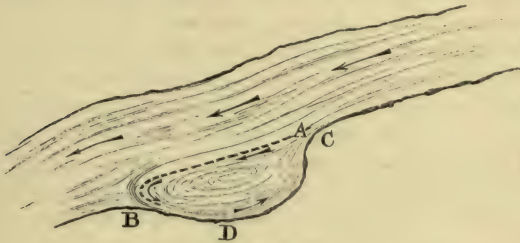


FIG. 27. AN EDDY.

his tackle a little above A, and let his float work along the dotted line to B, and round by the bank D to A again. The worms he had best cast in at B; they will then be swept round by the current to A, which is the most likely place to find the fish. These remarks apply to small eddies, where the distance from A to B is only a few yards. In very large eddies, formed by sharp bends in the river, and where the distance from A to B is great, say from 20yds. upwards, the angler can only fish a short distance along the dotted line A B; and even if they could be thrown so far, it will be no use to put in the worms at B. The best plan then is to put the worms close to the bank, opposite the point C, and if that does not appear

* Nottingham anglers put half a dozen worms in a cocoanut shell, and then snip them into small pieces with a pair of scissors.

to answer, throw them a few yards towards the middle of the eddy.

The foregoing remarks apply chiefly to those eddies which run shallow close to the bank. Now and again we come across an eddy the bank by which is almost perpendicular, and the water under it fairly deep. In such an eddy, the fish will be found more often lying close to the bank than along the dotted line.

As I have already stated—and I can hardly state it too often—the position of the fish depends in a very great measure on the colour of the water. One day we may visit the river and find the fish on the outside of the eddy, where the water is 5ft. deep. During the night it rains; the following day the water is much more coloured, and we find no fish where we caught them the previous day, but take several about 4yds. nearer the bank, where the water is only 2ft. deep. To be very successful in fishing eddies requires a good deal of experience; but fish feed so well when the water is clearing after a freshet (*i.e.*, a push of fresh water or flood), that the veriest tyro ought not at such times to go home with his basket empty, and that same basket will probably contain something more than roach—to wit, perch, eels, chub, tench, &c.

The leger for use in eddies should be the same as that already described (see page 27), as light a lead being used as will hold the bottom. The angler should keep his rod very still, and if using the treble hook arrangement—*i.e.*, Stewart tackle (see page 54)—he should strike at the slightest touch from a fish. If a single hook is used, a couple of slight pulls, or one considerable one, should be felt before striking. That is as near as I can put it on paper; a good deal of experience is necessary before the angler can acquire the art of striking just at the right moment. It is as well to hold the rod in the right hand, and bring the line over the first finger and under the other fingers. The slightest bite will then be felt on the back of the first finger, provided the line is a fine one, and the rod-rings I have recommended are used. When I feel a slight touch—the worm being on a single hook—I generally lower the point of the rod a little, so that the fish shall not feel any

further resistance. I then watch the line, and as soon as it tightens I strike.

It is very essential in fishing with worms that these useful baits should be free from dirt, or scoured, as that condition is usually termed. A few lines may therefore be usefully devoted to

Catching, Scouring, and Keeping Lobworms.—Everyone possessing or having the run of a garden can easily get some thousand of lobs any mild evening after a shower. As soon as it gets dark the worms come partly out of their holes, and may be seen by the light of a lantern. One person should hold the lantern, and the other a small bucket, and the two should go on tiptoe (if wearing tennis shoes, so much the better) along gravel paths and over close-cut lawns, picking up all the worms they can see. Lobs are not to be caught napping except during or just after rain. The drier it is, the less they show themselves, and the more difficult they are to catch. The worm-hunter should not grab at the worm's head (or tail—I forget which it is that lies out), but place the point of a finger on the worm-hole. The worm is then fixed; it can neither go forward or backward, and on being taken hold of can be drawn out, if pulled slowly and gently. On windy nights the worms will be found lying out in sheltered situations only, and during frosts keep within doors.

In the daytime a few lobs may be got by digging, or by watering the sides of gravel paths with a mixture of mustard and water. There are various other mixtures which answer the same purpose, but I need not mention them. It is not a bad plan to push a spade into the soil as far as it will go, and then move it backwards and forwards. This causes a miniature earthquake, and the worms leave their houses.

To scour lobworms, a good-sized earthenware pot should be two-thirds filled with damp moss—sphagnum is the best—and the worms put on the top of the moss. They quickly work through to the bottom. The moss should be kept damp, and changed every two or three days, and dead worms removed. In changing the moss it is not necessary to pick out all the worms. The plan is to turn out the old moss and worms on

the ground, half fill the pot with fresh moss, and put the old moss and worms on the top. The live worms then work down into the fresh moss, and the old moss, containing the dead worms, can be easily removed. The pot should be kept in a cool place. A little milk poured over the moss is supposed to hasten the scouring process. In three days the worms are generally ready for use. Need I say that the cleanest and most lively ones, especially those without knots in them, should be placed on the hook, and the coarser ones thrown in for ground-bait?

Persons who do a good deal of fishing, most especially in the winter, will find it well worth their while to start a "wormery." Collect a number of worms when the weather is favourable, and place them in a large chest or box nearly filled with garden soil. A few leaves, straw, hay, or any garden litter, placed on the top of the soil, will afford food for the worms, and the soil must not be allowed to get dry.*

I have gone so deeply into the various methods of roach-fishing that very little remains to be added on

Winter Roach-fishing in Rivers.—Everything that I have said relating to fishing with lobworms when the rivers are high and coloured, applies with as much force to winter as to summer fishing. The great winter bait is the tail of a lobworm; but if the season should happen to be dry, and the water low and bright, gentles or redworms will sometimes kill better. As a general rule, light leger float tackle (see Fig. 21) will be found most killing for roach-fishing in winter with the lobworm, and ordinary float tackle (see Fig. 13) when gentles or small worms are the bait.

Eddies are very easily fished in winter, being then free from weeds, whereas in summer these weeds are very much *en evidence*, and a great nuisance. What is an eddy when the river is high,

* Lobs are sometimes called dew-worms. The largest usually have a thick ring of colour round them, near the head. The smaller ones, without this ring, are termed maiden-lobbs, and are the best hook-baits. Two other common and useful worms are brandlings, or gilt-tails, and redworms, called on the Trent cockspurs. They are smaller than lobbs, and are found in rotten dung and decayed vegetable refuse, if old and not very moist. The brandling is the larger of the two, and may be known by its being partly covered with small rings, and being less red than the redworm. The so-called meal worm is the larva of a beetle found in mills, and is a first-rate bait for most kinds of fish in mill-tails.

is usually almost dead water when it is low, and consequently a place where weeds grow luxuriantly. After the first few frosts of winter the weeds begin to rot, and the roach soon work out of them. Their movements now depend as much on the height and colour of the water as in summer, but are also influenced by the temperature, which, if low, drives them into deeper water. They also like quieter swims than in summer, and always prefer a sandy bottom to any other; but I have, however, often done well on mud in winter. Late evening and early morning are not good times of the day for roach-fishing in cold weather. During the day there is usually a genial period of from one and a half to two hours in length; the sun may come out, or try at it, and the chilly feeling goes off for a while. Sometimes the geniality comes about eleven or twelve o'clock, sometimes not until three; but whenever it comes, then the fish are almost sure to bite. Winter fishing requires a good deal of enthusiasm on the part of the angler to be enjoyable, but if persevered with, it usually repays the trouble devoted to it, for the fish caught are always in excellent condition, afford good sport, and run larger than those taken during the summer. The remarks in Chapter I. as to the position of fish in winter should be read in connection with this part of my subject.

Roach-fishing in Lakes, Broads, Meres, Ponds, and Canals.—Roach-fishing in still water is a much simpler matter than in rivers. As a rule, the fish are not particularly shy, and fine float tackle—a modification of that shown on page 25—will suffice to catch them. The float should be very small—a porcupine quill is as good as anything—and there should be at most one or two small shots, about 1ft. to 1ft. 6in. from the hook. If gut is used, it cannot be too fine. Best of all is self-cocking float tackle (see page 49), as no shot are then placed on the line, and the bait sinks at about the same rate to the bottom as if no hook and line were attached to it. The objection to this arrangement is the difficulty of getting the gut quite straight (in the other case, the weight of shot straightens it), and if gut hangs in curls no fish are likely to be caught. After a good long soaking it is not difficult to nearly take out the curls; but the best plan is to soak the tackle for an hour the

previous day, then put the rod together, join the tackle to the running line, catch the hook near the butt, and by winding up the reel strain the line tight. If the angler is living near the water, he will then have his tackle all ready for use on the morrow; and even if he lives at a distance, he will find that the coiling of the gut for an hour or so in the morning, during the journey, will hardly affect its straightness, and that upon being wetted it will come straight in a few minutes. When no shot are on the line, I much prefer horsehair to gut. Self-cocking float tackle should always be tried in still water when the roach are shy, and not easily taken by other methods.

If the angler is fishing with float tackle, he will want a long, light rod, unless the fish lie close to the shore; but he can, if he prefer it, use a short rod, and cast out the tackle in the Nottingham style (see page 45). The running line and the rest of the tackle should be the same as that already described. Legering for roach (see page 52) is sometimes done in lakes, but unless the fish lie a long distance from the shore, I think float tackle is usually to be preferred. If a leger is used, the lead should be as small as the angler can conveniently cast out, and the line a dressed one, if long casts have to be made. For short casts, an undressed line can be used if worked after the fashion shown on page 45, in Fig. 20. Of course, long casts can be made off the reel; but this involves a heavier lead than is desirable, unless the method of squeezing a small lump of stiff ground-bait on to the line near the hook, is adopted. This gives the necessary weight for casting either light leger or float tackle.

The best all-round bait for pond roach is paste—white, red, or yellow*—but in some waters other baits will be found better. Wasp grubs are very killing at times, particularly if a few are mixed up with the ground-bait, and the principle, which I regard as being so important, of having the ground-bait of the same character as the hook-bait, but coarser, is thus carried out. Redworms and brandlings sometimes bring a few large roach to basket, and gentles are usually taking, especially in winter. For a general ground-bait there is

* Coloured with the ordinary paint of commerce, in powder.

nothing better than the one recommended on page 35. It should not be made into balls, but should be thrown in loose, and only a small portion should be thrown in at one time. If nicely-scoured gentles are used on the hook, a few unscoured ones should be thrown in round the float every quarter of an hour, or oftener. When paste fishing, a few pellets of paste should be cast in as ground-bait, and the same principle carried out whatever the bait on the hook.

All the precautions as to keeping quiet, and out of sight of the fish, of taking the tackle in and out of the water slowly and gently, of choosing a pitch facing the sun, of not over ground-baiting, of baiting the hook with clean hands, of landing the fish as quietly as possible—all these should be borne in mind as much in pond or lake as in river-fishing. Plumbing the depth should be done very carefully; and if the float when in use projects a quarter of an inch out of the water, the depth will be right when the plummet is on the bottom and top of the float is just level with the surface of the water.

“But where am I to fish in these still waters?” the beginner may very likely ask. The reply is that the fish will be found near the spots most abounding in their food, and also near where they can take shelter—on the edge of weeds, close to camp-shedding, under deep hollow banks, under trees which overhang the water, and particularly in those places where anglers are in the habit of fishing, and where, consequently, much ground-bait is thrown in. The depth is not nearly so important as in river-fishing, but in cold weather the fish will be found in deeper water than in summer. A gravel or sandy bottom should always be preferred to a muddy one, but few indeed are the ponds through which no stream flows in which the bottom is clean. In very large lakes which run deep towards the centre, the roach will be found near the shore, among or on the edge of the reed-beds, if there are any; but it must be borne in mind that the larger the piece of water, the more difficult it is to find the fish, and the angler will do well to choose a suitable spot, and throw in fish-food every morning for several days.

This brings me to the portion of the subject which I have kept until last, namely,

Baiting-up Roach Pitches.—I can hardly advise the beginner to bait up roach swims, for after he had got the fish together, and on the feed, at a considerable expenditure of trouble, and perhaps money, he would probably either scare them all away or make them so suspicious by his clumsy fishing that all his trouble would be wasted. His better plan is to stop not too long at one pitch, shifting as soon as he has succeeded in scaring the fish—a condition of affairs which is easily and quickly brought about. The old hand, on the contrary, baits up one or two swims for several days in advance, then fishes them quietly and carefully, and catches many and large fish.

As a general rule, roach afford very good sport in rivers without any ground-bait more than that which is thrown in at the time of fishing. Sometimes, during the hot months, when the roach get very shy, I bait up a swim with a bait new to the place, with success. For instance, once at Henley, when no roach were being caught, I baited up a deep swim with creed wheat for four days, then fished with wheat—a bait which, as a general rule, is not much used in the Thames—and had good sport. Every evening for a week I went to the same swim, and never left it without a nice basket of fish. The quantity of bait thrown in would be about two pints of wheat each evening. Had I been going to fish in the morning, I should have baited in the morning, and so made the fish expectant of food about the time I was prepared to present them with some inclosing a hook. Carrion gentles are excellent for baiting up places for roach, in either rivers or still waters. In ponds, they are, of course, thrown in loose; but in rivers, if the stream is strong enough to wash them away, they should be mixed up with clay. It is not a bad plan to place a number in a paper bag with a stone and sink them. The bag does not burst until it has been on the bottom some time. Another excellent plan in rivers is to tie a large stone to half a loaf, and sink it in a swim one or two days before you fish, the hook-bait, of course,

being paste. This should not be done in ponds, as the bread quickly goes sour in the stagnant water, and drives away rather than attracts the fish. In very wet summers, when the water is more often coloured than not, it is a capital plan to keep one or two swims regularly baited with worms—not many are required, but about a hundred should be thrown in every day. Swims so baited generally yield well, and more than roach will be brought to creel.

I have, I think, mentioned all the ground-baits that the angler need know of, but there is an unlimited number of mixtures which are more or less useful. For instance, there are brewers' grains, barley, or any other kind of meal, boiled potatoes (mashed), coagulated blood, pollard, greaves (called scratchings on the Trent), boiled rice, &c.

A peculiar ground-bait, said to be very attractive, was given in No. 562 of the *Fishing Gazette*. Take a few dozen lobworms, thoroughly scour them, and kill them by throwing them on the ground; nearly fill a clean lemonade-bottle with the dead worms, lightly cork it, and stand it in a saucepan of cold water, the water coming up to the neck of the bottle. Stew for five hours, add fresh water as required. Strain the contents of the bottle, and mix the worm-oil liberally with bread-and-bran ground-bait.

Finally, a word of advice kept to the end to make it the more impressive. The size of a fish's stomach is limited. If that stomach is distended with your ground-bait, the fish is not likely to further distend it by taking the bait on your hook. Therefore, when baiting up a swim, give the fish (for this applies to all fish) a fair and reasonable time—not less than twenty hours—to get fresh appetites after the feast you have provided for them, so that, when you come with rod and line, they will, like poor little Oliver, be asking for more.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERCH.

*Habits—Baits—Minnow-catching—Paternostering—Float-fishing
Legering—Lake and Pond Fishing.*



HOG-BACKED fish is the perch, with dark olive back and golden-brown sides, shading to a light drab on the belly. From its back, two-thirds of the way down its sides, are six dark bars of colour. Its fins are tipped with red, and its scales, though small, are very rough and hard; taken altogether, it is as handsome a fish as swims. Not only is it handsome, but a fine sporting fish, by no means easy of capture in well-fished waters, and most excellent eating, especially if it has dwelt for a time in brackish water, as some occasionally do. There are authentic records of perch weighing 5lb., and even more, caught in the United Kingdom. On the Continent they run larger; but in England anything over 1lb. weight is looked upon as a good fish, and, except in a few highly favoured waters, a two-and-a-half-pounder is not often caught. They are rarely found north of the Forth.

River perch do not differ very materially in their habits from roach. About June, after spawning, they are found in rather shallow water where the stream runs fairly fast. All through the summer they remain for the most part among the weeds, but not out of the stream. When the weeds begin to rot, they are found scattered about all over the river when the bottom is gravel or sand, and abound more particularly under deep clay

banks where there is a gentle stream, by the side of withies the roots of which grow out into the water, and along old camp-shedding, *i.e.*, where the banks have been shored up with slabs of timber. Quiet corners in weir and mill pools are also favourite spots. They are not often found in summer where the bottom is muddy, or where there is no stream, unless the river be in flood. About October, after a few sharp, frosty nights, perch begin to form shoals and get into deep water, and where one is caught, there should the angler patiently wait for a few minutes, in the hope of catching others. When the water becomes coloured, perch go into shallower swims, and all that I have written on pages 7 and 53 applies to them. When the water rises, perch retreat into the eddies, and *it is when the river is all but over its banks, and clearing after a flood, and the nights are frosty, and the days open, that the very best perch-fishing is had.* Then it is that the angler passes down the river from one eddy to another, pulling out fish almost as quickly as he can drop in his paternoster. When the water is low and bright, the sport with the fish, both in summer and winter, is *very* uncertain.

Men who know only a little about fishing are apt to have the ideas that perch are always in holes, always in shoals, and, until experience teaches otherwise, that they always feed voraciously.

It will be noticed from the foregoing remarks, which apply more particularly to good-sized rivers, that these views are incorrect. In very small streams, however, the deeper portions—often called the holes—will nearly always contain the best fish. A hole in a small stream would be a shallow in a large river.

It is not so much the time of year as the temperature, height, and colour of water, which influences the position of fish. If I were asked what swims to fish for perch in December, I could not give an answer; but if I were asked where to fish when the thermometer is at 30deg., and the water at summer level and quite clear, I might be able to form an accurate opinion on the subject. On this point, the introductory chapter should be consulted.

Perch Baits.—These are either live baits—minnows, small gudgeon, or the fry of coarse fish—or worms or fresh-water shrimps. There is no other bait worth trying, except, perhaps,

a small artificial spinning bait, which should revolve very quickly, and be kept very bright. Of worms, the best are thoroughly well scoured lobworms in winter, or at any time when the water is coloured, and redworms or brandlings in summer. I have often found brandlings take better in ponds than in rivers; they are found in old dung-heaps, and may be known by a number of small rings round their body. They smell offensively, and give off a yellow juice when handled, which sometimes irritates the fingers. A small gudgeon is by far *the* best all-round bait for large perch; but sometimes when the water is very low in summer, a small redworm presented on



FIG. 28. MINNOW-NET ON
BOAT-HOOK.

very fine tackle is better. Gudgeon are taken either in a cast-net or by angling (see Chap. VIII.).

Minnows are very favourite baits in rivers where they abound. The usual method of catching them is to dip a round or square, small-meshed net (see Fig. 28), attached by cords to a scull, boat-hook, or pole, into about 3ft. or 4ft. of water. A hole among the weeds, and the shallows below weirs, are

likely places in summer. The pole must be held very steady, and the bait-catcher *must* stand quite still. As soon as a few minnows are noticed over the net, the pole should be raised sharply, and the little fish transferred to a bait-can* or pail. In winter, the minnows are found mostly in ditches and small streams which drain into the river. They do not then come

* The best bait-cans have perforated zinc interiors, which enable the minnows to be lifted out without wetting the hands. When the can is carried, the water is aerated by washing against and through the perforations. I have recently had a bait-can made large and strong enough to sit on; it is at times a great convenience. If the can has no zinc interior, a small aquarium net is very useful to dip out the minnows. In winter, the water in the can should not be changed more than is absolutely necessary, as changes of water temperature are harmful to the fish. A few minnows can be carried for some time in a soda-water bottle, two-thirds full of water, and tightly corked up. Motion is essential, as it is the shaking of the bottle which aerates the water. A patent has been taken out in America for carrying fish in large quantities according to this principle. An admirable patent aerating bait-can has been designed by Mr. Basil Field, and is sold in most of the tackle shops.

well over the net, and often have to be driven into it by beating the water and poking the sedge at the sides of the ditch with a stick. When the weather is very mild and the water low, they work out into the river. In the "Practical Fisherman," Mr. Keene gives the following method of catching minnows in small streams :

"Procure a large, wide-mouthed, transparent pickle-bottle, and have the bottom cut out. Tie over the open bottom a piece of thin canvas or calico. Place some small worms or bread in the bottle, and drop the whole apparatus in the stream where there are plenty of minnows, with its mouth looking down stream, having a cord, of course, attached to its mouth." The stream, percolating through the calico, causes eddying currents which agitate the food and attract the minnows, which enter the bottle. I have not tried this plan. Glass minnow-traps are sold at some of the tackle-shops. In the Lower Thames, minnows are so scarce that a fine-meshed cast-net has to be used to take them. Some anglers believe that light-coloured minnows are more relished by the perch than dark ones. Minnows are easily lightened in colour by leaving them for half an hour in a white earthenware basin exposed to the light.

Fresh-water shrimps abound in most brooks and ditches, especially those which grow water-cresses. They are a first-rate bait, and should always be tried when obtainable. When the bottom of a brook is disturbed, they lose their footing, and get carried down the stream, and can easily be caught in a perforated zinc tray, an old biscuit-canister with holes in it, or a fine-meshed net. If some weeds are pulled up out of ditches, a number of shrimps will often be found mixed up with them.

Paternostering is the most popular method of taking perch, and it has many advantages. The construction of the paternoster is very clearly shown by the illustration (Fig. 29). For summer use, the main length of gut should be as fine as it can be obtained

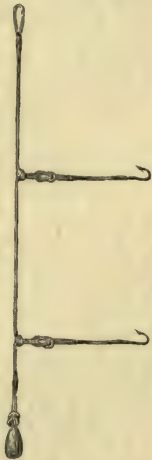


FIG. 29. PERCH PATERNOSTER.

without being fine drawn, and the hook links should be a trifle finer, and must therefore be fine drawn. I never use more than two hooks myself, but many anglers use three. If the water is very clear, the day sunny, and the fish shy, it is better to use only one. The position of the hooks on the main length of gut should depend on the size of the river and colour of the water. In a small stream where the perch holes run about 5ft. in depth, one hook should be close to the lead, and the other about 14in. or 15in. above it; but in a large river like the Thames, the lowest hook should, for use in clear, deep water, be placed 6in. above the lead, and the second hook 18in. higher. When the water is more coloured than usual, the gut link of the lowest hook should always be looped on to the loop by which the lead is attached; for in coloured water fish feed close to the bottom, and where the fish are there should the hook-bait be.

The size and bend of hooks should depend on the bait used and the sized fish expected. For a minnow in summer, I like a No. 8 Kendal, Sneek, or Crystal hook; for a gudgeon, the same, three sizes larger. For a redworm, a No. 9 Round Bend; for a lobworm, a No. 3 Round Bend; and for shrimps, large roach-hooks. Where the perch run very large, as in the Kennet, hooks a size or two larger should be used.

With regard to the length of the hook-link, that should vary according to circumstances. When fishing among the weeds in summer, it should be short—4in. In winter, when the river is clear of weeds, it may be 2in. longer. For paternostering there is no better rod than the light one described on page 13, without the extra butt. For summer fishing, and for use at any time in small streams, I prefer a Nottingham undressed silk line, which passes so smoothly through the rings that, by keeping the line over the first finger of the hand holding the rod, bites can be felt before even the rod point is shaken. For winter fishing, when the paternoster has sometimes to be cast out a long distance, I use a very fine, dressed, plaited line; but a Nottingham line can even then be used if the angler can cast off the reel. I will explain the two methods of casting later on.

To work the paternoster in summer, the angler is either taken

very slowly over the weeds in a boat or punt, and drops his paternoster, baited with minnow, worms, gudgeon, or fresh-water shrimp, in holes among the weeds, or else he fishes, as well as he is able, from the bank. In large rivers, a boat is very necessary in summer fishing, when the perch lie as far out in the stream as they can get without being out of the weeds. Still water and a muddy bottom are things to be avoided in summer perch-fishing. Please understand that all the perch do not lie in the weeds, but most of them do. Very often good sport is obtained, especially in early morning or late evening, when the fish are roaming about after food, by fishing right out in the centre of the stream; but this is best done with float tackle.

When the paternoster lead, after being swung (not cast) out, is exactly over the spot you wish to fish, the point of the rod should be lowered, and a little spare line, which you hold ready in your left hand, is let go; then, before the perch can see how it happens, a fine minnow is wriggling about in front of his nose. Now hold the rod steady, and keep the line taut. In a moment you may feel a slight touch on the back of the first finger of your right hand. *Lower the point of the rod at once*, so that the perch, which has seized the minnow, may not feel a taut line. A second more, and two jerks come at the line, then strike—not too hard—and play the fish gently, for a hook easily tears out of a perch's mouth. Then go on to another opening in the weeds, and never stop long in one place. To this rule there are a few exceptions. In some waters the perch are very shy, and are only to be caught by a great expenditure of patience.

In winter, you fish either in or just outside eddies, according to the height of the water. In very mild weather, the fish will even work right out into the stream. If the eddy is a very large one, do not row all over it, but moor at the top of it, and fish every bit of it by casting out the paternoster. To do this with Nottingham line and reel, place the little finger of the right hand on the rim of the reel, swing out the paternoster in the direction you wish it to go, releasing the reel as the lead flies out, as it should do any distance up to 40yds., or even more. When the lead has gone nearly far enough through the air, it is checked by the finger being gradu-

ally applied to the reel. This cast *must* be carefully practised before the angler goes a-fishing, unless he wishes to spoil his own sport, and that of any friend he may have with him. An easier method is to pull a few yards of line (which must be dressed) off the reel, on to the floor of the punt, and swing out the lead, the right hand holding the rod, and the line running through the left hand. This also requires practice, but is not difficult. Great accuracy in casting should be aimed at, and more accurate casts are made with the latter than with the former method (see also pages 44-46).

When a cast has been made, the paternoster should be left a few minutes, then drawn gently in a few yards, then left again, and so on, until it is brought close to the punt. On some days the fish feed eagerly, on others they have to be waited for, and bite cautiously. Paternostering is a very pretty and pleasing branch of bottom fishing, and I recommend it to the careful attention of beginners. The secrets of success are to cast with accuracy, to hold the rod steady, to lower the point directly a bite is felt, and of course to fish as fine as possible. If a small gudgeon is the bait, the perch should be given much longer time than with a minnow. Some anglers put a worm on one hook, and live-bait on the other, or even go in for a gudgeon on a hook mounted on gimp (with the view of its taking a jack), a minnow, and a worm—a nice choice for the fish, but such an unusual arrangement to see suspended in the water that I think it must make them suspicious. The one thing is apt to spoil the other.

Angling with Float-tackle for Perch.—This is very simple. The line and gut should be fine, the float a good-sized quill if the bait is a gudgeon, a smaller one for a minnow, the hook of size and kind according to the bait used (see remarks on page 68), and the shot placed not less than 1ft. above the hook. Nottingham running-tackle is by far the best for this style of fishing, as it is a great advantage for the angler to be able to be some distance from the float. The depth should, when possible, be plumbed, and the float placed so that the bait is about 6in. or 8in. from the bottom—less in coloured water.

In thick water, when the tail of a lobworm is used, the best

plan is to bait up (see pages 10 and 62) two or three likely spots, and fish as for roach, with the leger float-tackle described on page 47. A few broken worms should be thrown in every now and again, to keep the fish on the feed. A single No. 4 Round Bend hook or Stewart tackle may be used for the bait. Large takes of fine perch are often made this way.

In both summer and winter, the angler, if using Nottingham running-tackle, can cast his hook, baited with gudgeon or minnow, into all kinds of likely places, or can let it float down stream 20yds. in front of him while he follows in a boat. When the float goes down, the angler should allow the fish about a quarter of a minute before striking if the bait is a minnow or worm—more if the bait is a gudgeon, less if a shrimp. Some writers have advised cork floats for perch-fishing. but as floats are, at the best, necessary evils, which only frighten the fish, I imagine that the smaller they are, the less they show, and the more quietly they go under water, the better, and therefore I prefer the quill floats. Of course, the float must be just so large that the gudgeon or minnow, as the case may be, cannot pull it under.

Legering for Perch is a first-rate method when the fish are shy. Lobworms are the usual bait, but are not much use unless the water is coloured, or the swim has been baited up with worms.* A small gudgeon on a leger (see page 27) will kill perch when the fish will look at nothing else; but the bottom has, of course, to be very clear to allow the use of live-bait on leger tackle. The leger is cast out exactly like a pater-noster, but not moved so often, and is therefore suited for fishing places where the perch which run large and shy are known to lie, and have to be waited for.

Lake and Pond Perch-fishing.—This differs from river-fishing in the slight difficulty—except in large lakes—of finding the fish. In large lakes, trailing a small, bright, spinning

* Perch may sometimes be attracted to a spot by sinking some meat-bones, to which there are still a few fragments of meat adhering. A glass bottle, containing minnows, sunk to the bottom, has also been recommended, but I could never meet with anyone who had found it useful.

bait* will often determine the most fishy spots, but it is usually desirable to bait up a spot with worms (see pages 9, 10, and 63) for several days in advance. The baits for still water are the same as those used in rivers, but the worm will often take better than minnows in ponds. To find the fish, note the places where the water is deepest, the bank hollowest, where old piles exist, by the sides of weed-beds—in fact, anywhere where there is shelter and food for the fish. Float tackle, paternoster, or leger—all are good. In very deep water, if a float is preferred, it must be a slider (see page 26); but the paternoster is the most convenient form of tackle. In ponds, perch are usually easier to catch than in running water. In Lough Derg, one of the largest lakes in Ireland, I had some curious experiences with perch, which it may be useful to mention. They seemed to feed only from about June to September. The best bait obtainable was perch-fry, about the size of minnows, and the size of the perch depended altogether on the depth at which I fished. In about 10ft. of water, all I caught would run about 8in. long; in 20ft., they would all be within an ounce or two of $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. Fish of a size always seemed to swim in shoals together, and the various shoals would swim at different depths. I never caught a perch there over 1lb., so I suppose I never fished deep enough. In some lakes perch take an artificial fly well if it is allowed to sink, and is drawn slowly through the water. A red palmer is a good fly for the purpose (see Chapter VII.).

In ponds and lakes (but not in rivers) perch are in shoals most of the year, so wherever one is caught the angler should remain. Always give perch plenty of time to take the bait into its mouth before striking, as to prick and miss a perch usually causes the rest of the shoal to go away, or at any rate to leave off feeding—a fact well known to our forefathers, and

* If artificial spinning baits are bought expressly for perch, I should recommend small gold or silver Devons, very small gold and silver Clippers, or Farlow's "Watchet" minnow—in short, any very quick-spinning, brilliant bait. If a natural minnow is used, it cannot be mounted on better tackle than a very small Chapman Spinner, which I need not describe, as it is obtainable in every tackle-shop. Above the spinning bait should be a trace—i.e., a 2-yd. length of gut, in the centre of which a small lead is slung below the level of the line, below the lead being two small brass swivels. These are sold ready made.

mentioned in every book on bottom fishing for several centuries past. I met an angler last season who informed me that, when he found the perch taking shyly, he always fished with a small triangle, one hook of which he put through the minnow's lip. With this arrangement, which is only suitable for float-tackle, he had to strike immediately on perceiving a bite. I have not had an opportunity of trying this plan.

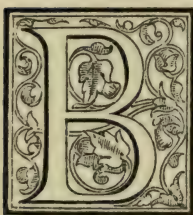
I have only to mention a very artistic method of perch-fishing, and this chapter is finished. Take a 3-yd. length of fine gut, loop on a roach-hook at the end, and place a shot 10in. above the hook; bait with a fresh-water shrimp, and cast it into likely spots. Let the bait sink until almost on the bottom, then draw up slowly, and strike on seeing the line tighten. Other fish besides perch are caught in this way.



CHAPTER V.

THE BARBEL.

Habits and Haunts—Baits—Legering—Ground-baiting—Fishing with Float Tackle in the Nottingham Style—Tight-corking—Clay-ball Fishing.



BARBEL, when you can catch them, give better sport than any other of the coarse fish. They are found in a good many rivers in England, but not in Ireland or Scotland; and are most plentiful in the Thames and the Trent. In the last-named river they have been known to reach a weight of 18lb. A barbel of 12lb., or a little over, is, however, the largest any reader of this book is likely to capture. In shape the fish is very much like an enlarged gudgeon. His mouth is decorated with four barbules, or beards, and the upper part of his head and back is a greenish brown, shading to a yellowish green on the sides; while over all is just a suspicion of bronze. The belly fins are tinged with a pinkish red.

The barbel spawns* in the spring, on shallows, where it spends a week to recruit, and then takes lodgings for the season in or near what anglers term barbel swims. These swims are, broadly speaking, of three kinds: First, weir and mill-pools; second, deep water alongside steep clay or overhanging banks; third, deep holes in mid-stream, where the current is strong, and, generally, where the current is heavy and the

* The eggs, or roe, are sometimes very poisonous.

depth considerable. In the weir-pools, barbel are best fished for with the leger; but wherever the bottom runs fairly even, and the current is not too strong, float tackle has the advantage. The best hook-bait at the very commencement of the season is two caddis; but later on there is nothing so good as a well-scoured lobworm (see page 57). Gentles and greaves are also good, and occasionally cheese is killing. In autumn, a small lampern is said to be a deadly bait for large barbel, but of it I cannot speak from experience. In early spring, just after spawning, barbel will frequently run at a spinning bait, and sometimes a live-bait, and often cause grievous disappointment to the patient fishers for Thames trout. The best months for barbel-fishing are August, September, and October.

Barbel are both shy and capricious, going off the feed for days together. Like salmon, there are some pools in which they never will take a bait, though known to be present in large numbers. The tackle for barbel should be fine but strong, and should *always* be tested most carefully before being used. Very few fish will be caught unless the angler goes to considerable trouble and expense in the way of baiting-up swims for one or more days in advance; and as a general rule, the fishing for the day is over at 10 a.m., or sooner. One can hardly fish too early or too late for barbel. When the water gets coloured, barbel shift out of their holes into the shallower streams to search for food, and the first day of a rise in the water is the golden opportunity of the barbel-fisher. Baits for these fish cannot be too clean and sweet.

Legering for Barbel.—This is the usual Thames method, and is best suited for weir-pools and uneven bottoms generally. The leger is the same as that described on page 27; but the gut should be a trifle stouter, and the lead—which it is well to paint the colour of gravel—will have to be heavier to keep the bottom in the heavy water. The best hook for the usual bait—a lobworm—is sliced No. 1 (see pages 19 and 21). In Fig. 30 is shown a typical weirpool, with the set of the currents and the position of the punt. The dotted line represents the fishing-line. The punt should be about 30yds. (more if the water is at all bright and shallow) off

the fish. If the river is clear, the angler should cast to A, where the water is probably deep. If the water is coloured, he should cast to B, where the pool usually shallows a little. Of course, all pools are not alike, but there is, in most cases, a family likeness. The punt might be the other side of the lasher (L), in the eddy (E), moored near the bank; or the barbel might lie just where I have placed the punt, in which case the punt should be moored at F. Local fishermen know from experience just where the fish are, and will sometimes give information on the subject, if it is clearly to their interest to do so; but the angler should

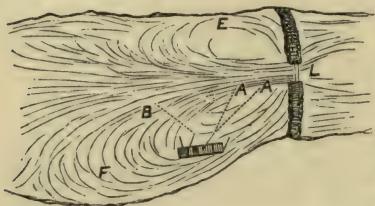


FIG. 30. POSITION OF PUNT IN WEIR-POOLS, FOR BARBEL-FISHING.

always personally superintend the "baiting," or he may not get the worms thrown in he pays for. Sometimes there may be only one clean piece of bottom in a pool, and to find this the services of the local man are absolutely essential. If the bottom is

covered with big stones, and piles stick up here and there, any amount of tackle will be lost, and very few fish taken. The foulest bottoms always bear the most fish. A rypeck should be put in, at least a day before the fishing takes place. The punt can then be moored without disturbance, a stone or weight being dropped quietly over the end where the pole is not. The running tackle for legering should be as fine* as can safely be used, dressed if the angler casts Thames fashion, undressed if he casts off the reel. The stouter of the rods mentioned on page 13 is best for this fishing.

A word now as to ground-baiting. About a thousand lobworms are required. Pick out a hundred small ones without rings (maiden lobs) for hook-baits, and scour them carefully. Throw five hundred above the swim (see pages 9, 10, and 62) early one morning, three hundred the next, and try the swim the morning after,

* The late Francis Francis once caught a barbel weighing 64lb. on a single hair. The fish was hooked in the back fin, and took three and a half hours to kill. I know of no more remarkable feat in the annals of angling.

using the balance of worms for casting in now and again while fishing. I prefer to throw in the worms whole, as the big fish get them. Dace or small fry eat up broken worms. Never give the final dose of ground-bait less than twenty hours before you fish. It is very difficult to advise about the method of casting in worms. In some pools the worms may be thrown in loose, and they will work round and round the eddy until eaten; in others they would get swept away at once. In these latter, it is best to place the worms in clay balls, or in a little net weighted with a stone, and drop them only a few yards above where the leger tackle will lie. Another plan is to let the worms work into a turf, and throw the worm-laden turf into the swim. Great judgment is required in ground-baiting. The hook-bait should be similar to the ground-bait, but finer in quality. If the hook-bait is greaves, use a ground-bait of chopped greaves, made into balls with potato and meal. Greaves and cheese are, for one reason, bad ground-baits, sickening the fish for some days. One dose of cheese, and that a small one, is always sufficient. More does positive harm.

On coming to fish at 5 a.m. or 6 a.m., moor the punt quietly, throw in half a dozen worms—broken this time—being careful to throw them so that they sink in the right spot. Then select a worm, dip it in a pan of sand or sawdust, and thread it on a No. 1 sliced hook, commencing at the head, and leaving only $\frac{1}{4}$ in. of tail hanging loose. Cast out, let the leger sink, wind in line until it comes taut, and, with the line over the first finger and under the other fingers of the right hand, wait patiently for a bite. Don't strike at the slightest touch, but only at decided bites. On hooking a fish, hold him as hard as the tackle will stand for a few seconds; this pulls the hook* home. Then play him carefully, keeping him clear of old piles, &c., and the punt-pole. If you have repeated bites and misses, and find the head of the worm crushed, put on only the head portion, so threaded that the head is on the point of the hook, and you will very likely

* I always file off half the barb of the hook when angling for leather-mouthed fish, such as barbel, chub, and carp. A touch or two with the file on each side of the hook is also an advantage.

catch some large dace. When dace bite freely in these swims, the barbel are not often there. If the barbel bite shyly, put on a smaller hook, and try a cast with the worm hooked through the middle only. The bait can then crawl about the bottom, and is very attractive. Many good barbel-fishers follow this plan, and I am not sure that it is not the best always. The shank of the hook should be coloured to match the worm (see page 53). It is as well to stain the gut below the lead a light brown, to match the bottom, and it should be finer than the gut above the lead, so that, if the tackle catches in the bottom, the inevitable break is near the hook, and only a small portion of the gut is lost.

Float-fishing for Barbel is carried on with Nottingham tackle similar to, but, as a rule, heavier than, that described on page 88. The spot should be baited beforehand, and the angler casts in a few pieces of worms before taking a swim. The swim has, of course, to be picked out for its uniformly level bottom, and it should be close to a hole containing barbel. Float-fishing has this disadvantage, that the angler can usually only fish near, and not in, the baited hole, and has, therefore, to get the barbel out of their lair by judicious baiting. Barbel are not found every year in the same quarters, so that the angler should notice carefully where the fish are in the habit of leaping, and be guided by that evidence in the choice of his swims. In float-fishing, the bait must trip along the bottom. If the swim runs shallow, the angler should let his tackle go until it stops; then hold it a little while—the bait, of course, resting on the ground. The farther the float from the angler, the harder must be the strike. It is time to strike when the float goes under.

Another method of float-fishing for barbel is termed “tight-corking.” The angler plumbs so that 1ft. or more (the stronger the current, the longer the line below the float) of gut rests on the bottom. He casts the tackle out some distance, and works it down stream as far as it will go by keeping up the point of his rod as the line runs out, which checks the float and causes the bait to rise from the bottom. When the float is over the fish, he holds it there until he has a bite. This is a

very deadly method, and can be followed where the bottom is a little uneven. The best swims for the purpose are those which shallow at a little distance from the angler. The float has to be a rather large one (most writers say cork, but I much much prefer quill when I can get one large enough), as a goodly number of shots are necessary to keep the bait down when the float is checked. In barbel, as in all other, fishing, the angler should use as small a float and as few shots as the depth and rate of the current will allow. At the same time, fish are often left uncaught by too few shots being used in swift swims, the bait, in consequence, not keeping near enough to the bottom. Of course, when the swim is very deep, a sliding float (see page 26) will have to be used. Float tackle is particularly useful for fishing shallow swims—3ft. to 5ft. deep—into which barbel come when the river is discoloured. When float-fishing, the angler should be very careful not to over-feed the fish: nothing puts a stop to sport sooner. Nottingham anglers carry half a cocoanut-shell and a pair of scissors. They put three worms into the shell, and clip them into twenty or thirty pieces with the scissors, and use these very small fragments of worm as ground-bait.

A somewhat similar tackle to that used in tight-corking, very suitable for swims of the non-turbulent order, is shown in Fig. 21, on page 47.

Clay-ball-fishing for Barbel.—This is a very useful method when the water is clear, and the fish more than usually shy. The tackle is a 2yds. length of gut, a No. 4 hook—shank coloured white (see page 20)—and a fragment of stick, lin. in length, fastened crosswise, 12in. above the hook. Into a lump of stiff clay either gentles or greaves are worked, and a piece the size of an orange is squeezed round the stick. The hook is then baited with either gentles or greaves, and the gut above the hook is wound round and pulled into the clay ball, until only the hook-bait is showing. The ball is cast out like a leger, but not so far. The fish come and dig their noses into the clay, and sooner or later one is sure to take the hook-bait—a circumstance which the angler will feel and respond to. A rather stiff rod is desirable, and the tackle need not be very fine. If the

bait is a worm, some broken worms should, of course, be mixed into the clay ball.

I have only to add, or rather repeat, that our friend the barbel is very shy, and that fine fishing for him really pays. Unless the swim is in the midst of numerous tackle-destroyers, such as old piles, big stones, roots of trees, and the like, where large fish must be held—a process necessitating stout gut—use as fine tackle as you reasonably can, and if you ground-bait with discretion, fish with patient carefulness, and rise early enough, you will, no doubt, catch many barbel, and enjoy grand sport.



CHAPTER VI.

THE CHUB

(CHEVIN, CHEVENDER, LARGE-HEADED DACE, SKELLY).

Attributes—Habits and Haunts—Flies and Fly-fishing—Bait-casting—Fishing with Frogs—Dibbing—Legering—Nottingham Fishing.



RIGHT good fish to angle for, and a foul bad one to eat, is the chub. By fly-fishers he is ranked between the family of which the salmon is the head, and the bright, dashing, silvery little dace. To both bottom-fisher and fly-fisher he affords capital sport, and, but for his lack of flavour, would have been exterminated long ago, being far from difficult of capture. As it is, the pot-hunter usually leaves him alone; so let us be thankful that our brave friend is as bad in a dinner-plate* as he is good when connected with the angler by a line of fine silk and a fragment of bent wire.

The chub is not found in Ireland or the North of Scotland, but is common in other parts of the United Kingdom, Norfolk, Devon, and Cornwall excepted. He comes under the German term "white fish," and is easily distinguished from his silvery-sided, white-bellied brethren, roach, dace, bream, and rudd, by his broad, short head, and generally chubby appearance. By his black tail, also, and pinkish-white lips, may you know him, and by

* If you will eat him, let it be on the day he is caught. Fillet him, egg and bread-crumbs the fillets, and fry in butter. There is another good recipe in the "Compleat Angler."

his eyes not being red, as are the eyes of roach and rudd, and by his ventral and anal fins being red, as are *not* the ventral and anal fins of dace. The young of roach and dace may be thus distinguished from the young of chub: In the former, the anal fin is concave; in the latter, slightly convex.

Chub are often caught weighing 4lb., sometimes 5lb., and very rarely 6lb. and 7lb. Stuff (with the stuffing peculiar to taxidermists) any chevin of 5lb. or over—that is, if you collect specimen fish. Chub spawn in May, and afterwards—in June—stay for a week or two in the swift-running shallows to scour themselves. Later on* they retire to their regular haunts, which are, for the most part, holes overhung by trees, where the stream is sufficient to keep the bottom from being muddy. Here let me observe that few fish (tench and bream excepted) are found in summer swimming over a muddy bottom—not so much because they dislike the mud as because they love the stream, and where the stream is, the mud is not. Under an upright, clay bank chub are always to be found, and also where withies or other bushes grow out in the water. I would as soon fish by the side of a steep clay bank as any place in a river. Under and near bridges are also very likely spots.

Chub are sociable fish, and, for the most part, make up little family parties, and reside together in holes; but stray, good-for-nothing fish, the outcasts of scaly society, are to be found scattered about the river, either on shallows, among the weeds, or along banks, in water varying from 1ft. to 15ft. in depth. These pariahs fall a prey to the fly-fisher in particular.

Fly-fishing and Bait-casting for Chub is capital sport where it can be pursued with any chance of success—*i.e.*, in rivers but little disturbed by traffic, or in disturbed streams, early in the morning, before the disturbances commence. The best tackle is a stiff, 11ft. or 12ft., greenheart or split-cane fly-rod, a heavy, dressed, tapered silk line, and 3yds. of moderately fine, undrawn gut. As to the fly, I hardly know what to recommend, there are so many good ones. Mr. W. Senior (“Red Spinner”),

* In much-disturbed rivers, such as the Thames, chub only remain on the shallows a few weeks; but in quieter waters, such as the Bedfordshire Ouse, they are found in quite shallow water as long as the weather is warm, and in such places they afford great sport to the fly-fisher.

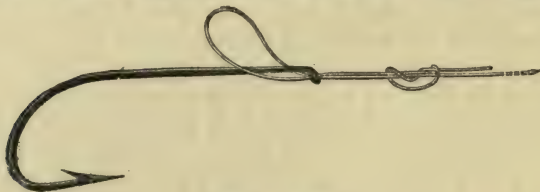
angling editor of the *Field*, has kindly given me a pattern fly of his own design, which he has found very killing. It is dressed on a Snecky Limerick grilse hook. The body is of chenille tinsel, with a tail, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, of white kid. Close to the head is wound a long coch-y-bondu hackle. For dark days this fly should, I think, be dressed with a dark shade of tinsel and the coch-y-bondu hackle, but for bright days with a brighter body and ordinary red hackle.

The favourite chub-fly of the late Mr. Francis Francis was of grilse size—body, silver tinsel, a furnace hackle (dark red with black centre) wrapped round it, a few turns of black heron over that at shoulder, an under-wing of a few sprigs of emerald peacock harl, and an over-wing of dark turkey; and for a tail, a tag of white kid glove or wash-leather. Another favourite of his had a yellow crewel body, with red hackle and a dun turkey wing. The two flies which I have most used are: First, a large coachman, with body leaded if used in the Thames or other large rivers (except on shallows); and, second, an imitation beetle—body, rusty-red pig's wool, ribbed with gold tinsel; legs, bronze peacock harl; back, a cock's black tail-feather, tied down at head and tail. The former fly is best when the water is clear, and at night; the latter kills well in slightly coloured water. Other good flies are large alders, and palmers, red or black, with peacock harl bodies. Artificial bees, wasps, cockchafers, and beetles are also very killing at times, especially if allowed to sink a foot or more under the water. Just at the commencement of the season, the bait known as the Alexandra fly often kills well. In rivers where the May-fly is abundant, chub, during the rise of that fly, sometimes take nothing else, and require as much fishing for as trout.

Chub like a good mouthful; but the size of the fly should depend on the size of the chub and the river. In the Thames I prefer large, heavy flies, and sink them; in smaller and shallower streams, smaller and lighter flies, which hardly sink at all. I have, indeed, found a dry fly, which rests on the surface, sometimes kill chub when they would not look at a sunk fly. The dry fly should be tried when the chub are seen rising, and each fish can be fished for. Chub-flies should

always be tied on eyed hooks, or attached to gut loops. The strongest way of fastening them to the gut cast is shown in Fig. 31.

In small rivers which are not navigable, the fly-fisher must, of course, fish from the bank, taking care to keep as much out of sight as he possibly can, fishing across, and rather up than down, stream. In larger rivers, such as the Thames, fishing is best carried on from a light punt, boat, or canoe. The angler must



The Knot Open.



The Knot Pulled Tight.

FIG. 31. METHOD OF FASTENING GUT TO CHUB-FLIES MOUNTED ON EYED HOOKS.

not stand up, must not be clad in bright flannel raiment, and must not rock his craft by too energetic casting. A good boatman is half the battle: slowly and quietly he allows the boat to drift down stream, *at an even distance from the bank*, checking it or urging it on by noiseless touches with the sculls as occasion may require. The angler kneels, sits, or crouches in the stern, and casts his fly with a good splash close to the bank, *under overhanging boughs*, and in every

spot where there is the least chance of finding a chub. The length of his cast must depend on his skill, but very long casts are not necessary if the angler keeps low in the boat, and the boat is worked noiselessly. If a heavy-led fly is used, the angler must keep a keen eye on his line, and strike directly he sees it tighten. In shallow water, he will often see the chub swim out from the bank and take the fly. After casting, the angler should wait about four seconds, then draw the fly slowly about a foot nearer him, then wait again for a second or two, and, if nothing comes of it, cast elsewhere. The short draw of the bait tightens the line, and enables bites, or rises—as you may please to call them—to be felt, and also, I fancy, makes the bait more attractive.

I am convinced that many a chub seizes hold of a fly under water and leaves it again without our knowing anything about it. Many chub-fishers put a few gentles on the hook of their fly. This practice usually adds to the basket, for the chub not only take the fly-bait more readily, but keep hold longer after they have seized it. A piece of kid glove, or parchment out of a fly-book, is not a bad substitute for the gentle. When a fish is hooked, he should be held at first, to prevent him getting into his lair among the roots; the boat should be brought out into the centre of the stream, and the fish played as far away from the bank as possible.

Small frogs, black slugs, crayfish tail, gentles, lobworms, and many other baits, may be cast like, and with greater success than, the artificial fly. Those I name are the best baits, and I have placed them in order of merit. As soon as the grass is cut, tiny frogs will be found in hundreds in the meadows by the river. Boys will collect dozens, and these valuable baits can be kept for weeks in a live-bait can, with a little damp moss or grass, which should be changed every few days. To bait with *small* frogs, take a No. 4 Round Bend hook, file down half the barb, and sharpen the point; bite on a No. 1 shot, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. above the shank. Put the point of the hook in at the frog's vent, and out at the top of its head; tie the hind legs together, above the shot. To kill the frog, hold it by the hind legs, and fillip it on the head with the finger. Hooks baited with frogs are shown at

Fig. 32. If a large frog is used—for chub 1lb. and upwards will take a very large one—the hook should be double, and the shank leaded. The end of the gut should be put in at the frog's mouth, and out at its vent, with a baiting-needle. The legs are tied above a small knot in the gut. This being a heavy bait, it should be cast underhand, as if it were a paternoster (see page 70, in the chapter on Perch). The frog once cast, whether small or large, should be allowed to sink, and go with the stream, as a pull of the line is certain to scare any admiring chub which is contemplating a banquet. With these natural baits it is as well to allow a few seconds before striking. There is hardly a day in summer that chub may not be taken by



Large Frog, for Casting with Perch-rod.



Small Frog, for Casting with Fly-rod.

FIG. 32. BAITING WITH DEAD FROGS FOR CHUB.

this means, provided the angler keeps out of sight of the fish and casts dexterously. Even a practical fly-fisherman will sometimes find a difficulty in casting these heavy baits. I believe the whole secret consists in allowing plenty of time between the backward and the forward cast. If the line is not given time to extend nearly straight behind the angler, the cast is usually a bad one. With light flies this point is not so important.

Black slugs are best cut down the middle, turned inside out, wrapped round the hook, and tied on with white cotton—a noisome operation, which results in a deadly bait. Both slugs and lobworms are best on Sliced hooks (see page 21), or on a hook

the shank end of which has been softened in the flame of a candle, and bent out as shown in Fig. 33. Gentles are much used on the Thames for casting. About eighteen should be placed on a No. 5 hook, and a few added every quarter of an hour. Many anglers prefer a small triangle, but I always fancy I do best with the single hook.

Dibbing is another method of surface fishing for chub. It requires no particular skill, but great care and caution. The tackle is a stiff bamboo rod, an undressed silk line, a pierced pistol bullet, 1ft. of not too fine gut, and a hook the size of which depends on the bait used. Bees, wasps, black beetles, small frogs, cockchafers, grasshoppers, moths, large flies—all are good baits for the purpose. The bullet is threaded on to the running line, and kept from slipping on to the gut by the knot joining the gut to the line. To dibb successfully, learn the haunts of the fish by peering cautiously over the banks the previous day. Knowing, then, a chubby spot, attach to the hook one of the baits mentioned, reel up the line until the bullet touches the top of the rod, approach the river-side on tiptoe, and put the bait, which dangles 1ft. below the rod tip, through some convenient hole in the branches—for I presume trees overshadow the spot. When the bait overhangs the water, wait a few seconds, for the movement of the rod may have aroused the suspicions of the fish; then slowly unwind line—which the weight of the bullet draws out—until the bait just touches the water, where it should kick about for a while. If no fish seizes the bait in four or five minutes, try another spot. When a fish is hooked, hold him tight, and get him out as seemeth best under the circumstances. Catching a chub usually frightens others, and it is best to go on to another place.

Bottom Fishing for Chub is carried on either with the leger or with float tackle. Legering for chub differs little from legering for other fish (see pages 27 and 75). The weight of the bullet must, of course, depend on the strength of the stream. A suitable bait (cheese, greaves, lobworms, &c.) must be used,



FIG. 33. HOOK
WITH BENT
SHANK, FOR
WORM - CAST-
ING.

and the leger must be cast where the chub are, the angler keeping as much out of sight as possible, and casting the tackle neatly, and without undue disturbance of the water. Legering is sometimes very useful for fishing swims which cannot be got at with float tackle.

The only method of float fishing for chub worthy our consideration is that practised by the Trent anglers, and already described in the chapter on Roach, on pages 43 and 51, to which I beg to refer the reader. The tackle, save that it is rather



FIG. 34. FLOAT
TACKLE FOR
CHUB BAITED
WITH CHEESE.

stronger, is in all respects the same. The rod should be the stouter one described on page 13. It is better to have the quill larger, and the shots heavier, than is really necessary to keep the bait below the float, as with somewhat heavy tackle the bait can be let down stream more steadily than with light tackle. The tackle which I find most generally useful in summer carries a pierced swan-shot between two split No. 1 shot, and two No. 3 shots nearer the hook. The illustration (Fig. 34) shows their relative positions, though the float shown is not a very good representation of a quill. I always serve the gut round with silk at the spot where the leads are placed. The hook is shown baited with cheese-paste; the shape into which it is squeezed is very important. Some anglers prefer a triangle, but I hardly ever miss a fish if I bait a single hook carefully.

The point of the hook should be all but through the cheese. If the point is well covered, fish after fish will be missed, the cheese acting as a guard to the hook. I always press down the cheese over the point until I can feel the point with my thumb, when I know that the chub will feel it too. The hook for cheese which I use is a No. 1 Round Bend. Trent anglers use a size or two smaller. The point should always be kept sharp by a touch on each side with a needle or watchmaker's file; and the barb is best filed half away. The shank of the hook for the cheese-bait should be painted (see page 20) with white lead and French

polish, so that if some of the cheese tumbles off, the shank is not conspicuous by its colour. I have mentioned cheese because I believe it to be the best summer bait. That which is old and rotten is most attractive; but it hardens in the water, and should be mixed up into paste with a little butter. As a matter of fact, any cheese will do, and I rarely bother to get any special kind. A good red, soapy American, cannot be put to a better use than as a bait for chub; it requires little or no making into paste. Bread-and-cheese paste is often used with success. Another good summer bait is three or four wasp grubs, which should be baked for a few minutes before being used, or scalded, and then thoroughly dried in bran; and ripe plums, skinned, blackberries, strawberries, and cherries (the latter particularly under cherry trees overhanging the water) are at times very killing. For the first few weeks of the season chub will take a minnow greedily.

The foregoing are clear-water baits. *If the water is discoloured*, either in winter or in summer, nothing is so good as a well-scoured lobworm. In autumn, greaves, or "scratchings," is a good bait, and in winter nothing is better than pith and brains, particularly in very cold weather. But the water *must* be clear for this bait. Greave have to be boiled. The white portions are used for the hook. Pith (the spinal cord of a bullock) has also to be prepared; the skin surrounding it should be taken off, and the interior washed in several waters until it is quite white. It does not require boiling or scalding. A piece about the size of a cob-nut should be placed on a No. 4 hook. The brains are used to throw in as ground-bait. Trent anglers chew them, and blow them into the water. But is this really necessary?

To use our float-tackle and baits we, if in a small stream, take up a position on the bank 20yds. or more above a well-known haunt of chub, get the depth in front of us (see pages 37 and 43), and, if the water is clear, put the float so that, to the best of our belief, the bait will be about 6in. to 9in. from the bottom when it reaches the chub. If the water is coloured, we fish close to the bottom. We ought to know something of the swims, the depths, position

of weeds, and so on, or have someone with us who can tell us these particulars. In a strange river we are certain to lose much time and many fish in finding out these details. Well, we cut up a few cubes of cheese (if we are baiting with cheese) with our knife, throw them in, and let our tackle, carefully baited after the manner already described, follow them down stream steadily and without check.* As it reaches the spot where the chub are, our hearts beat a little faster, perhaps, and then down goes the float, up goes the point of the rod, and we feel we are in a good fish. Immediately after striking we reel up as fast as we can, for master chub must not be allowed to go into the roots which project from the bank, and by holding him hard at first the hook is pulled well into his leathern mouth. We try the swim again, and after a trial or two basket another fish, and then move to a fresh spot, for it would probably be useless to continue fishing here. But there are occasions—very rare ones—when as many as a dozen chub may be taken out of one hole.

If we fish from a boat or punt, there must be no flurry, noise, or movement which can give the fish an inkling of our presence. When we are 40yds. away from the fish, we get close to the bank, and drop down with the stream until we reach the top of the swim. We are careful not to stand up, *to put in no rypecks, and drop no weight*; but our man catches hold of a twig, or holds on to the bank with a boat-hook. From the boat we fish as we did from the bank, and are *certain* of success if the fish have not been disturbed by us or some passer-by.

I would never bait up a spot for chub, but pass from swim to swim, picking up a brace here and a brace there. Even the ground-bait thrown in should be small in quantity, especially if it is cheese or greaves. A pound of cheese will last out a day's chub-fishing, ground-bait and all. Success, of course, depends a good deal on the angler's judgment in so throwing the ground-bait that it reaches the right place; but not so much with chub as with many other fish.

* As a matter of fact, the mere passage of the line through the rings slightly checks the float; and this is desirable, for, if it were otherwise, the float would get in advance of the bait, as rivers flow faster near the surface than lower down.

Many anglers may shrug their shoulders on reading the statement made at the beginning of the chapter, that chub are not particularly difficult to catch. But I know I am right. Izaak Walton truly wrote that the chub is the "fearfullest of fish;" but he is also the most greedy, and one of the most stupid. The sight of a man in motion, an unnatural movement in a bait, a footfall on the bank, or a stir in the water, will send chub to the bottom at once, and stop their feeding; *but* if you do not frighten them, and can place the bait before them in a fairly natural manner—as, for instance, a fly which seems to drop from the trees above, or a fragment of cheese drifting down stream—then chub will take the bait almost as certainly as many persons who read this chapter will not attend to half the directions I have been at some pains to give. Thus it is that, when the water is low and bright, the careful chub-fisher makes the best bags, for his bait is seen far and near by many fish, while he himself can, by using suitable tackle, keep so far off as not to be noticed. I have known a 4lb. chub, whose age should have given him wisdom, to be caught in 2ft. of water, when half-a-dozen split shot, a good-sized quill, tipped with red, and a part of the running line, were all visible to him. But he saw no harm in those things, and took the bait. Had he known a human being was about, I could no more have hoped to catch that chub than I can hope to make a careless person a good fisherman.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DACE

(DARE OR DART).

*Habits and Haunts—Bottom-fishing—Baits and Ground-baits—
Flies and Fly-fishing—Eyed Hooks and Knots—Blow-line
Fishing.*



DACE are bright, silvery, graceful, slender little fish, which often find their way into the roach-fisher's creel. In colour they are almost entirely silvery, and the fins lack that tinge of red which is noticeable in the chub and the roach. They are easily distinguished from a small chub by the anal fin, which in the dace is almost colourless, but in the chub pink. The dace is common to all rivers containing coarse fish, and is frequently found in trout-streams, to the detriment of the trout; but it is absent from Ireland. It is rarely, or never, found in ponds or lakes which are not fed by streams of some kind or another. Dace are very rarely taken over 1lb. in weight; indeed, few anglers have caught one even so heavy as that.

Dace spawn in the spring, and then, like chub, barbel, and several other varieties of fish, spend a few weeks in very shallow, swift waters, for the purpose of scouring themselves. Later on they spread over the river in all sorts and conditions of swims, but in the evening, during the hot months, may always be looked for on gravelly swallows. In winter, they retire to deep water, and even in late summer the large fish will usually be found in swims of considerable depth. They are often found

in barbel-swims, to the great discomfiture of the barbel-fisher, who strikes again and again without catching anything, and, perhaps, in the end, by constant striking, drives the barbel away, or, at least, sends them off the feed. As a general rule, dace prefer sharper streams than do roach, and the remarks in the first and third chapters, on fishing in coloured water and in floods (see pages 8 and 53), apply as much to dace as to the other fish.

Bottom-fishing and Baits for Dace.—The float-tackle used for this purpose is practically the same as that advised for roach, described on page 25. As the dace swims as often in mid-water, or close to the surface, as on the bottom, it is not as necessary to fish as near the bottom as we should if angling for roach. Many large dace, however, fall a victim to the seductions of a lobworm, particularly the head portion arrayed on a leger. As dace generally haunt swifter streams than do roach, the float-tackle has to be heavier shotted than would be right in more sluggish swims. Dace are very sharp biters, and the angler cannot strike *too* quickly on seeing a movement of his float, however slight.

The two favourite baits for these fish are gentles and red-worms. Caddis baits are also very good. In the late summer and autumn a lobworm will take the largest fish. I once baited up a very quiet, deep corner near Henley-on-Thames for tench, and my baiting partly resulted in a dozen fine perch. During the morning I was dreadfully bothered by some fish which kept taking the float under, but which I could not hook. An examination of my bait showed me that the fish, whatever they were, only seemed to touch the head of the worm, which was, as usual, up the shank of the hook, so I threaded the next worm on with the tail of the shank, and the head over the point. I then took nearly every bite, and soon had more than a dozen of the finest dace I caught that year. The incident enlightened me considerably as to why one has so many bites from dace when barbel-fishing without any fish getting hooked; and since then, I have repeatedly found that dace prefer the head to the tail of the lobworm, at least in the Thames. For the redworm, I like a very small set of Stewart tackle (see page 54), and the same arrangement answers very well for the lobworm. All roach-

baits will take dace, but I have already mentioned the best. Both roach and dace are very variable in their feeding. One day, in the Loddon, I found the roach take wheat, and the dace gentles. The following day I could only catch dace on wheat, and roach on gentles.

Dace can very often be caught without the use of ground-bait, but when fished for from a punt in the Thames fashion (see page 49), a ground-bait consisting of balls of clay, bran, and a few carrion gentles, is nearly always used. The clay is very useful, as it sinks the balls of ground-bait right in the swim, which is usually rather a rapid one. The more feeding ground-bait recommended for roach (see page 35) also answers for dace, provided it is made stiff enough to withstand the stream, and contains a small pebble to make it sink quickly; but it should be thrown in very sparingly, as dace are small feeders. If the angler is fishing after the Nottingham fashion (see page 43), he should occasionally throw in a few of the baits he is fishing with, be they gentles or redworms, care being taken that they are thrown high enough above the swim, so that they reach the fish in the swim. It is no use ground-baiting the fish 20yds. down the river when your float and tackle only travel 15yds. Raking the bottom in lieu of ground-bait is often practised with success on the Lower Thames. A gudgeon-rake (see Chap. VIII.) is used, and the raking is usually done behind the punt.

Fly-fishing for Dace is very pretty sport, and certainly not inferior to the trout-fishing which is obtained in some waters I could name. Dace rise best to a fly during August, September, and October, and in June, while the May-fly is on, in rivers visited by that lovely insect. They will often rise freely all day, but the evening is the best time. The tackle is similar to that used for Welsh or Devonshire trout: A light, 10ft. fly-rod—hexagonal split cane for preference—striking well from the point, a dressed tapered silk line to suit the rod (the stiffer the rod, the heavier the line), and a length of gut, called a “collar,” of 8ft. or 9ft., tapered down to the very finest-drawn gut. Two or three flies may be used—one, of course, at the fine end of the collar; another, called a dropper, on a piece of very

fine gut 4in. long, should be placed 2ft. higher; and if a third is used, it can be placed 2ft. above the first dropper. Less gut is desirable when the casting has to be against a strong wind. Beginners should content themselves with one fly and casting a short line.

There are many ways of fastening the droppers to the gut-collar, but the neatest knot and, therefore, the best for dace-fishing, is one designed by Mr. R. B. Marston (shown in Fig. 35). The only objection to it is that the flies are not easily changed; but in fly-fishing for dace a change of flies is not often necessary. The knot is shown loose; it has, of course, to be pulled tight. The gut-collar, fly, and one or more droppers, is called a "cast" of flies.

The usual method of fly-fishing for dace is to cast the three flies across or down stream, and then to draw them over the water, striking gently, but as *quickly as*

possible, when a fish rises at one of the flies. The beginner had best practice on rather a sharp stream, which will extend his line when he makes bungling casts (as he is sure to do), and so give him a chance of catching something. Blank days are very discouraging to beginners. Veteran anglers usually bear them philosophically.

There is a method of fly-fishing which is very deadly, and will take dace in still water on a hot, bright, calm day, when the ordinary method is no use whatever. It is known as dry-fly fishing, and is *now* almost the only way by which the highly educated trout of the Hampshire chalk streams can be induced to take the artificial fly. Only one fly is used, which is tied to float—that is, with an extra amount of (cock's) hackle, and with split wings, like the natural fly. It is cast lightly, about 2ft. in front of rising fish, and allowed to float on the surface of the stream, and go down with the current just as a natural fly would do which had alighted on the surface of the

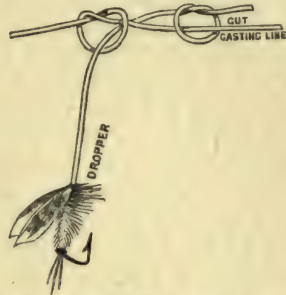


FIG 35. MARSTON KNOT FOR DROPPER FLIES.

water. Any pull of the line by the angler, or shake of the rod-top, destroys the illusion. When the fly gets wet, it has to be dried by repeated waves of the rod in the air. Large dace sometimes rise in the evening in the deep, quiet reaches of rivers. They will then take the dry fly, and the dry fly only.

The trout-fisher should have no difficulty in finding, in his book, a few small flies which will kill dace; but if flies have to be specially purchased, I should recommend black palmers (with silver twist on body), red palmers, and coachmen (a few of the last-named tied with upright split wings for dry-fly fishing), all of which will be rendered more killing by the addition of a very short tail of white wool, or white kid glove. Mr. R. B. Marston, editor of the *Fishing Gazette*, tells me that the best dace-fly he knows has a silver tinsel body, light wings, and light grey hackle. I have not yet had an opportunity of trying it, but feel sure it is a good fly. Quill gnats and small govenors will also be found killing, and a few tied with upright wings for dry-fly fishing may prove very useful. Dace also rise well to red-spinners and yellow duns. In dace-fishing, as in trout-fishing, the angler will lose nothing by noting the flies on the water, and if there is a great batch of any particular fly, he will certainly be rewarded if he puts up an imitation of that fly, and fishes with it. When a rise of May-fly is on, dace will take the artificial freely. At such times the red-spinner is also a good fly.

The most modern form of hook for artificial flies is known as the eyed hook. The shank of the hook is terminated by an eye, to which the angler fastens the gut. I find little or no difference in the hooking powers of eyed hooks and hooks bound to gut. Flies on eyed hooks are economical, for as soon as the gut wears near the fly it can be re-tied. The angler can also put on gut of any degree of fineness. The one disadvantage of eyed hooks—a very slight one—is the trouble of tying on the gut. One of the easiest and best methods of fastening the fly to the gut is the Turle knot, illustrated on page 21.

As dace will take the artificial fly, they will, of course, take the natural insect, and a bluebottle, house, or any other fly of sufficient size, properly offered to them, is almost certain to be

accepted. The best tackle for this purpose is the finest silk line procurable, 1ft. of fine gut, and a No. 10 Round Bend hook. The longer the rod, the better. A fly is impaled on the hook, and the angler, taking his stand with his back to the wind, allows his bait to be blown out in front of him, when, by lowering the point of his rod, he causes the fly to alight on the water. All fish which rise to the fly are to be caught in this way.

Dace, when in good condition—*i.e.*, after August—are by no means bad eating, if really well cooked.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE GUDGEON.

Habits and Haunts—Tackle and Baits—Thames and other Methods of Gudgeon-fishing.



LITTLE fish, which takes the bait as eagerly as the most impatient angler could wish all through the hot weather, when no other fish, except chub, can be persuaded to look at the most tempting morsels, can only be described as amiable. The amiability of the gudgeon extends, indeed, to the table, where, after having been carefully egged, bread-crumbed, and fried, he makes a most delicious dish, as any visitor to a Thames-side hotel, or restaurant on the banks of the Seine, can no doubt testify. Moreover, as a bait for large perch he is unrivalled, and is by no means despised by our friend *Esox Lucius*. In shape, the gudgeon is something like a barbel, with two barbs and an overhanging upper lip. His colour on the back is brown, with slight silvery sheen over the sides and belly. He rarely grows longer than 6in. or 7in.

Habits and Haunts of Gudgeon.—Gudgeon spawn in May, and are very prolific. So numerous are they in the Thames, that it is no uncommon thing for twenty dozen to be brought in as the result of a day's fishing by two anglers. I have known an angler to catch sixteen dozen to his own rod in one day. Gudgeon-fishing begins about the end of June, provided the weather is warm; but these fish bite best in August and September. In June and July they should be fished for in water

varying from 2ft. to 4ft. deep, where the bottom is sandy or gravelly, and the stream moderate. In September the finest fish will often be taken in swims from 10ft. to 12ft. in depth. The very best swims are always those just on the edge of holes. As soon as the cold weather sets in, gudgeon shift to deep water, and do not often take a bait. Like barbel, they probably eat very little in winter. The weather cannot be too hot or the sun too bright for gudgeon-fishing.

Tackle and Baits.—The float-tackle used for roach (see page 25) is suitable for gudgeon, but a small shot should be bitten on 4in. above the hook, which should be a very small one, and have its shank painted red. I need hardly repeat that the float should be as small, and the shot as few, as the depth and force of the current will allow. The gut (many anglers prefer hair) cannot be too fine, and the hook should be very small—No. 12 or No. 13. The bait is a fragment of worm, redworm being the best. When the gudgeon run very large, I put on a larger hook and about half a redworm; but, as a rule, I find I take most fish by threading on to the hook a piece of worm not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length; it usually suffices to catch a dozen fish or more. I would advise the use of light running tackle, even for gudgeon, for other fish—notably perch—are often hooked.

The Thames Method of Gudgeon-fishing is the best with which I am acquainted. The essentials are: A punt, two rypecks (*i.e.*, mooring poles); a rake, the head of which contains four or five teeth and weighs from 5lb. to 10lb., and the handle of which is about 18ft. long; the light float-tackle above-mentioned, and some well-scoured redworms or brandlings. It is also as well to take out our heavier rod and a paternoster, which we can bait with small gudgeon or minnows, and lay out by the side of the gudgeon-swim. If we do this, we shall surely catch a perch or two, and shall add, both directly and indirectly, to the weight of our basket; for when perch are allowed to remain, they assuredly drive the gudgeon out of the swim, or, at least, stop their feeding. Well, all things being ready, our fisherman, or a brother angler, punts us to a suitable swim, somewhere out of the wind, and moors the punt across the stream in the manner

described on page 50. We sit facing down stream, precisely as if we were going to fish for roach, plumb the depth, arrange our float so that the bait all but touches the bottom, bait, and take a trial swim or two. The gudgeon may be there in great quantities, and if so, no raking is requisite for some time. We strike sharply, but not hard, on seeing the slightest depression of the float, and gudgeon come fast into the punt. I must not forget that we so shot our lines that only the tip of the float is in view, and therefore the float goes under water at a very slight pull from the fish. After a while the fish leave off biting. Then the rake is brought into requisition, and the bottom is well raked in front of the punt. This muddies the water, and stirs up various items of fish food, and the gudgeon swarm up to the punt to feed. When that swim is fished out we try another, and as we count up our dozens we smile at the infatuated individuals who *will* waste their time trying to catch jack or roach on this blazing hot summer's day.

In small, shallow streams, where the fishing is done from the bank, a long-handled garden rake will be found useful to rake the bottom with; and sometimes anglers wade in, stir up the sand or gravel with their feet, to bring the gudgeon near them, and fish while standing in the water. It may be inferred from this, and rightly so, that the gudgeon is not a shy fish. Gudgeon placed in ponds have increased wonderfully in a few years. In such places I have *heard*, on very good authority, that they will sometimes rise to a fly, but have never seen such a thing happen.



CHAPTER IX.

THE CARP.

Habits and Haunts—Baits—Two Days' Carp-fishing—Float-fishing—A Self-cocking Float—Legering.



NO fish is found in the British Isles which has a larger brain, or is more difficult of capture, or, strange to say, is more easily tamed, than the common carp. In some waters, indeed, in which these fish abound, there is no record of one having been caught by the angler. A carefully-executed engraving of the common carp will be found at the commencement of this book. It has very large scales, one long back fin, and a barbule hanging from each side of its mouth. Its back and sides are a golden bronze, shading to a yellowish-white on the belly; its fins are a dark brown. In England, carp over 15lb. are rarely taken by anglers, but specimens are occasionally netted weighing 20lb. and over. On the Continent it very much exceeds that weight, even going to double. In Germany carp-culture is carried on as a business, and the fish bred are fairly good eating; but the common, undomesticated English carp is a horrid fish, so far as its edible qualities are concerned. Gold and silver fish are species of carp; they are easily caught with roach-tackle and baits.

Carp spawn in May or June, and soon get into condition. They are found more commonly in lakes and ponds than in rivers. In still waters their haunts are soon discovered, as they swim, or lie, close to the surface when not feeding, and are

easily seen. At such times they often make a peculiar sucking noise. In rivers, they like quiet holes among weeds, and are sometimes found in barbel-swims. They hardly feed at all in winter, the best fishing being during the summer months. They sometimes bite well after a thunderstorm.

The following are good carp-baits: Redworms and brandlings, paste sweetened with honey, gentles, parboiled potatoes, green peas, boiled wheat, green wheat, wasp-grubs dipped in honey after having been put on the hook (I read this in the *Fishing Gazette*), paste made of old cheese, paste made of bread, soft roe of herring, and a little wool, cherries, and almost any kind of grub, worm, or grain. Any bait used must be perfectly clean and sweet. The ground-bait should resemble the hook-bait, but should be coarser.

Float-fishing for Carp is an amusement at which many anglers have failed for want of proper precautions. It is the method best suited for lakes and ponds, where the angler fishes from the bank. For fishing from a boat or punt for carp, the leger is usually more suitable, as the bait has to be cast some distance away. We will suppose now that we are on a visit to a friend who has a fine sheet of water well stocked with very large and, consequently, very shy carp. Few of these fish have ever been taken, and their favourite baits are not known. We decide to devote one day to float-fishing, and the next to fishing with the leger, and to try sweet paste, worms, and potatoes—the latter on the leger. On our arrival our host laughingly says we shall catch nothing—a remark which puts us on our mettle, and we straightway sally forth and examine the water. The keeper joins us, and after a chat with him we select four places for float-fishing from the bank, and also decide to bait up with potatoes two deep holes some distance from the shore. It is now about 11 a.m., so, not to lose any time, we have some potatoes boiled in their skins, all the bits of crust in the bread-pan scalded, and set a boy to dig diligently for worms of all descriptions. The scalded bread, when soft enough, is kneaded up with some bran and meal, the potatoes are chopped up as soon as they are half-boiled, and the best of the redworms and brandlings are picked out, and put to scour in moss for hook-

baits. As soon as the ground-bait is ready we go down to the lake, divide our worms over two of the swims near the bank, adding a few balls of the bread ground-bait as we have hardly enough worms, and throw the last of our bread ground-bait—about 1 gal.—into the other two swims. To bait the holes near the centre of the pond we get into the punt, and throw in nearly 1 gal. of potatoes at two places about 40yds. from the shore, where the carp are usually found. So that we may know exactly where to cast the legers, the keeper pulls up a reed, ties a piece of cotton to the thick end of it, and to the other end of the cotton fastens a small stone. He drops one of these arrangements overboard a few yards beyond each of the potato-baited spots, so that when we cast from the bank in the direction of the reed—which the stone causes to stand upright in the water—we shall, if we go within about 3yds. of it, put the leger in the right place.

Before returning to the shore the keeper draws our attention to the back fins of certain large carp which are showing above the water, near some water-lily leaves about 50yds. off. A small worm, if it could be dangled just over the edge of a water-lily leaf, might be taken by one of those big fellows. I fortunately have a light rod and a Nottingham reel and line with me. It does not take long to straighten out 1ft. of moderately fine gut, and fasten it to the end of the line, also a small Round Bend hook with the shank painted worm colour. A foot above the hook I place two small shot, and thread on just enough of a worm* to cover the hook, leaving the ends dangling. The punt is then backed up very quietly and gently towards the water-lilies, keeping them between us and the fish. After one or two unsuccessful casts I manage to drop the shot on to a solitary leaf, and the worm hangs over the side. We are too near for the fish to take the bait, so I pass the butt of the rod back into the punt, and getting to the top ring, pull line off the reel as the keeper very quietly rows the punt away from the water-lilies. When some 20yds. or so away we stop. After about five minutes the shot are slowly pulled off the leaf, and I know that a fish

* A green pea is a good bait for this method of fishing.

has the bait. I strike, and soon have the satisfaction of landing a fine carp, as big or as little as you like to imagine. Some people might have said that the game was not worth the candle but overcoming one of these most cunning fish, by means however elaborate, gives most anglers the keenest satisfaction. Before leaving the lakeside, we plumb the spots we are going to fish from the bank, and mark the depths on our rods.

On reaching the house we prepare our tackle—several 2yd. lengths of fine, round, strong gut (which we put in soak), stained a pale weed-green (see page 23), and some hooks—No. 8 Round Bend for worms, No. 9 Round Bend with a shorter shank for the paste. The shanks are coloured red and white respectively (see page 20). The gut of the hooks is stained a mud colour, as near the colour of the bottom as we can get it. Before going to bed we put up our rods and lines, take the gut out of soak, loop on the hook, catch the hook in the reel, and wind up tight. Keeping the line stretched on the rod all night will cause it to be quite straight in the morning. We should not catch a fish if it were in curls, or even in waves. My friend puts on a very small, self-cocking float; I prefer a small, dry twig of dead wood, which will look more natural on the surface of the water. I say this having a lively recollection of certain roach which were in shallow water, and absolutely refused to feed until I took all the shot off my line, and replaced the float with a small twig. We hope to do without shot to-morrow.

The following morning at daybreak, fortified by some rum and milk—nauseous but admirable mixture—we steal down to the lake, each with a camp-stool and two pegs cut thus—Y_A †_B, to hold the rod, the butt of which goes over A and under B. Our floats are at the right depth—i.e., 12in. farther from the hook than the water is deep, so that 12in. of gut will lie on the bottom.* Very quietly and gently we steal to our respective pitches, put the pegs in the bank 1ft. apart, the Y-shaped one nearest the water, bait our hooks—the one with paste, the other with a redworm—and cast out our lines as gently as possible. Then we adjust the butts of the rods on the pegs (a heavy

* Some carp-fishermen keep their bait a foot from the bottom. This plan should be tried when the other proves unsuccessful.

metal reel will sometimes weigh down the butt of the rod, and render the \perp -shaped peg unnecessary), throw in a few worms over the worm-bait, and a few fragments (not lumps) of bread ground-bait, freshly made that morning, around the hook baited with paste, and retire a few yards from the bank, to sit on our camp-stool and await developments. My friend's float moves first; carp bite slowly, and it is not until he sees his float sailing away that he takes up his rod and strikes. Then I get a fish, and by carefully playing all we hook, and by not over-feeding, we keep on catching large carp at intervals of half an hour until 8 o'clock. Then a breeze springs up which blows our floats about, and causes the baits to drag. We are then obliged to put some shot on our lines (more or less according to the force of the wind) 12in. from the hook, so that they just rest on the bottom. About 9 o'clock the fish leave off biting, and we catch nothing more until the evening, and not much then. Of course, when the fish left off biting at one swim we tried another.

There is little more to be added on the subject of float-fishing for carp; minute attention to detail is all-important. The tackle should be as fine as can safely be used. If weeds are abundant, and the fish run large, it should be stronger than if the fish are small and the bottom clear. A Nottingham line, rather stouter than that used for chub, is first-rate for carp fishing. Twisted lines are stronger than those which are plaited. Float-tackle can be got out some distance from the bank by following the directions given on page 45.* After the morning part of the float-fishing was over, we put some more potatoes (but a less quantity than before) into the holes where we intended to leger. The following day we try

Legering for Carp, hoping to catch some of the fathers of the flock. My friend still uses his Nottingham line, casting his leger from the reel; but I prefer a fine, dressed silk line, and cast the leger Thames fashion, coils of line lying on the grass at my feet; and by this means I certainly cast with

* If the float-tackle is too light for long or accurate casting, a small piece of rather stiff ground-bait can be squeezed on round the shot. When paste-fishing, it is not altogether a bad plan to squeeze some soft ground-bait round the paste. The hook-bait then appears to the fish to be a portion of—in fact, the very kernel of—the ground-bait.

greater accuracy than my friend. For hooks we use small triangles, and bait them by passing the loop of the hook-link through a lump of half-boiled potato, or a small, new potato, by means of a baiting-needle (see Fig. 36), burying the triangle right in the potato. Our legers are made according to the directions on page 27; but the gut below the lead is stained to match the colour of the bottom as nearly as possible. Our leger leads have to be rather heavy, as we have a long way to cast. If we had a less distance to cast, a small pistol-bullet would do. Having cast out the leger, we take the check off the winch, put

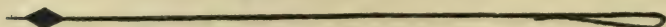


FIG. 36. BAITING-NEEDLE.

the rod in the forked sticks as before, wind up the line taut, and wait until we see the line drawn off the reel, when we at once strike. It is better to lay down the rod than to hold it: If held in the hand, the rod is bound to shake a little, and give a quivering motion to the line, which is, no doubt, observed and appreciated by the fish. The carp bites slowly; with quicker-biting fish it is better to hold the rod. The result of our legering is only four fish, but they are very large ones. We should, no doubt, have caught more but for the splash made by our heavy leads.

Carp-fishing is not a branch of the sport which I can commend to beginners—it is too discouraging. Success depends, in a great measure, on the angler keeping the carp in absolute ignorance of his presence, on judicious ground-baiting, and on presenting the bait to the carp in such a way that they have no reason to suppose there is any connection between it and a human destroyer of fish.



CHAPTER X.

THE TENCH.

Habits and Haunts—Raking a Pond—River Tench—Baits and Ground-baits—Legering and Float-fishing.



TENCH are handsome fish, which are more often found in ponds and lakes than in rivers. They are common enough in England, less common in Ireland, and not often met with in Scotland. In shape they are not unlike carp, but differ from them in many other respects. Their scales are so small as to be almost invisible, and they are covered with a thick coating of tenacious slime. The back and sides of tench are a golden olive-green; eyes small, and ruby red, and fins dark. At each side of the mouth is a very small barbule. Tench live an extraordinary length of time out of water, and are, perhaps, more tenacious of life than any other fish. They are sometimes taken as heavy as 6lb., and there is one of 11lb. on record; but a 4lb. tench is always looked upon as a large fish of its kind. In the Upper Thames tench run large. Seven I caught one summer at Pangbourne averaged 3lb. each. Very fine tench are also taken out of the Hampshire Avon.

Fishing for Tench in Rivers, so far as my experience goes, is not much use unless the water is coloured and the swim well baited with worms. The most likely swims are near the bank, just where the mud, weeds, and water-lilies end and the gravel begins; and if there is a lot of roots and branches of trees in the water, so much the better. Tench are also found in the

large eddies, where the water is deep and the bottom muddy. In ponds tench bite freely at times, but are very uncertain in their feeding. The best fishing is had in the spring and summer, early in the morning and late in the evening. In rivers, tench are taken in winter if the water is highly coloured and the weather mild. I believe that in stagnant water they invariably bury themselves in the mud when the weather gets cold, but they certainly do occasionally come out to feed.

Tench have extraordinary powers of living in mud, and large fish are frequently taken out of what are little better than mud-holes. In my youthful days I used to fish a small farm horse-pond, which, though shallow and muddy, contained many tench over 1lb. in weight. One summer the pond all but dried up, and some gipsies nearly cleared it of tench by means of hay rakes, literally raking the fish out of the mud.

All the tench I have tasted, whether taken in the Thames or in muddy ponds, have been excellent eating, and well flavoured. The slime should be scraped off before the fish are cooked. If the fish from any pond are bad flavoured—and I have heard of such—they might be improved by being placed in a hamper moored in a stream, or, failing the stream, in a vessel of water placed under a tap left running.

The best baits for tench are worms—redworms and brandlings in summer when the water is bright, lobworms in winter, or at any time when the river is coloured. Paste made of stale brown bread and honey (mentioned by Izaak Walton) is also very good, and sometimes wasp-grubs and gentles are used with success. The best ground-baits are worms, when worms are on the hook; bran, brown bread, and potatoes when the brown-bread paste is used; and carrion gentles when wasp-grubs or gentles are the hook-bait. The worm-oil mentioned on page 63 is said to be very attractive for tench, but I have not tried it.

Angling for Tench in Ponds and Lakes is very similar to carp-fishing. The same precautions should be taken, though tench are not quite so shy as carp; nevertheless, it always pays to attend to matters of detail. As a rule, it is best to let the bait lie on the bottom, as in carp-fishing; but occasionally tench seem to take the bait more freely when it only just

touches the bottom. The fish bite best in summer before 9 a.m., and after 7 p.m., and may be taken on a leger long after dark.

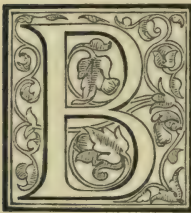
River-fishing for tench can be carried on either with a light leger, with the leger float-tackle described on page 47, or with the tight-corking float-tackle, which is very similar (see Chap. V.). Very few shot and small quill floats can be used, as tench-swims are always slow. My Thames experience of tench taught me that it is better to wind the worm round and round the hook, inserting the point at each turn, than to thread the worm on from head to tail. When I threaded the worm, the fish used to take it up, and then, after mouthing it, feel the hook and leave it; but when I surrounded the hook with a thick lobworm I found the bait was not left, so I suppose the hook was not felt. I think it is as well not to strike until the float sails off. I have tried Stewart worm-tackle for tench, but did not find it answer, though it was excellent for roach, chub, and perch. The late Francis Francis advised the angler, when the tench merely played with the worm, to draw the bait very gently away a few inches to bring the coy fish up to the scratch. I have not tried the plan myself.

I have written but little concerning tench-fishing, because I wish to avoid repetition, and because by perusing the chapters on carp and roach the reader will learn almost all that it is really necessary for him to know, short of actual experience, on the subject.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BREAM.

Carp Bream—Bream Flat—Habits and Haunts—Making a Night of it—Baits and Ground-baits—Float-fishing and Legering—The Ouse Method—Pond and Lake Fishing.



BREAM are in shape the very opposite of chub, being narrow across the back and shoulders, and round and deep in the belly. There are three known varieties of these fish in the United Kingdom: First, the Pomeranian bream, so rare that I may dismiss him without further notice; second, the carp or golden bream, a fine fish, which grows to 15lb. or more in weight, is often taken weighing 5lb. or 6lb., and abounds in the rivers and broads of Norfolk, in the Eastern counties, and in the lower reaches of the Thames and some of its tributaries; thirdly, the white bream, silver bream, or bream flat, a silvery little fish, which rarely exceeds 1lb. in weight.

Bream spawn in May, or later, and are fished for all through the summer and autumn, and are sometimes taken in winter, when the water is coloured. The favourite haunts of carp-bream in rivers are the deep holes at bends, where the stream is slow, or almost imperceptible. The broad, deep reaches, where the water hardly moves, are usually well stocked with these fish. In ponds, the deepest holes are also the most likely places to find bream. In very large lakes, meres, and broads, it is generally best to fish not too far from the sides, near reed-beds, and in holes among weeds, where the water is from

10ft. to 15ft. deep. At certain times of the day bream rise to the surface and sport, so that, by a very slight strain upon his powers of observation, the angler can easily discover the whereabouts of the fish. When sporting, they of course do not feed on the bottom. It often happens that almost immediately they disappear from the surface the angler begins to catch them.

The great objection I have to bream is the early hour—particularly in rivers—at which they usually breakfast. In most streams no sport worth the name will be had except between 2 p.m. or 3 p.m., and a mortal's breakfast hour. Many bream-fishers make a night of it, going to the river's bank about midnight, and waiting there until the fish come on the feed. And when the bream do "come on," what mighty takes are made! Great fellows, varying from 2lb. to 5lb., take the bait one after another, as fast as the angler will allow them, only stopping when the sun rises well above the tree-tops. Then, weary, with aching back, and a sack half full of fish, the bream-fisher goes home, staggering under his burden. This is no fancy picture. On the Bedfordshire Ouse, men go out night after night and bring home fish which they weigh, not by the pound, but by the stone. Many a time have I met them coming home to breakfast just as I have been starting to fish that glorious river, and now and again have joined them in one of their night attacks on a bream stronghold. In certain streams, to wit the Lower Thames, good baskets of fish are sometimes made in the daytime.

Baits and Ground-baits.—Worms are the very best bait for bream—either a small lob, three redworms, or two brandlings. Boiled wheat (see pages 33 and 42), greaves, gentles, wasp-grubs, caddis baits, and paste, will also take these fish, but are decidedly inferior to worms. For ground-bait, lobworms are best, when obtainable in sufficient quantities (see page 57); failing these, greaves can be tried, or boiled wheat, or a mixture of any of the aforementioned baits, made up into balls with clay or barley-meal. Sheep's blood is supposed to add greatly to the attractiveness of the ground-bait.* No doubt the fish do like

* The following is a nice mixture for ground-bait sometimes used in the Norfolk Broads: One pail fresh (brewers') grains, half pail bullock's blood, half pail clean clay, with a few handfuls of greaves, and a little crushed oilcake. The whole should be made into balls, and dried in the sun.

it, but I have always been satisfied with the sport I have obtained without using it. Potatoes, bread, and pollard, is a good mixture for a pond-fishing. On the Ouse, a very favourite ground-bait is brewers' grains; half a bucketful is thrown in about twenty-four hours before the angling takes place. The remarks on baiting up swims on pages 10, 39, and 62, should be noted, as they apply to all kinds of fish.

Float-fishing and Legering are the two methods by which bream are usually captured. For the deep swims, where the water is almost motionless, there is no better tackle than the combination of float and leger described on page 47. If the swim is very deep, it may be necessary to use a sliding float (see page 26). In the Lower Thames, rather heavy water is fished for bream, for which a leger is best suited. Swims of from 4ft. to 6ft. in depth are best fished with ordinary Nottingham tackle. Bream are not often in such shallow water, but when they are, the angler cannot be too far from them. The way to use this tackle is described on pages 43 and 78.

In night fishing, the angler who uses coarse tackle will catch more fish than he who uses fine, as he can land the fish quicker. The professional bream-fishers of the Ouse use no running tackle, but a long, stout rod, a very large cork float, and a few yards of coarse hemp line, terminated with a few feet of very thick gut. They moor their boat—if they fish from one—in a line with the stream, and stick out two rods with about 2ft. of line between the top of the rod and the float. They plumb the depth, so that 1ft. or more of line rests on the bottom. Their tackle cast out, they put down their rods, and only take them up when they see their heavy floats go under. This plan is of very little use in the daytime, but answers well at night, when it is to be presumed the bream cannot see the line. Fine *un*-drawn gut will be found best for bream-fishing, and the running tackle the same as used for chub—if anything, a little stouter. The larger of the two rods described on page 13 answers admirably for carp-bream. If the travelling-float, or Nottingham method is followed, the bait should just trip along the bottom. The size of hook used must, of course, depend on the bait.

For pond and lake fishing, a very tiny float and one or two

shots are all that is required. A self-cocking float (see page 26) and no shot on the line, is better still *if* the gut can be got to hang quite straight (see page 104). If the tackle has to be cast some distance from the bank, it must, of course, be weighted more heavily, or the leger can be used. The depth of bream swims should never be taken at the time of fishing: the swim should be plumbed the previous day, and the depth marked on the rod.

The bite of a bream is peculiar. After several uneasy movements, the float (unless it is a self-cocking one) lies flat on the surface, and then sails slowly away just under the water. Anglers differ as to the right time to strike. I believe in waiting until the float goes under, but some anglers strike at the moment the float begins to lie over on its side.

These remarks, taken with what I have written concerning fishing with float and leger in previous chapters, are, I think, all that are necessary respecting carp and bream. The white or silver bream is caught in a similar manner, and bites freely—too freely sometimes—on any suitable day. In some of the Norfolk Broads they are so numerous and so hungry as to be a perfect nuisance to the angler who hopes to catch better fish. A certain amount of knowledge of the water is very desirable in bream-fishing, and I would advise anyone, however accomplished, to be not above asking the advice of local fishermen as to the haunts of the fish and their habits.

I must not forget to add—for the comfort of my readers—that if any serious bream-fishing is attempted by the angler who has any regard for his clothes, a kitchen apron should be worn. A towel or duster will be found most useful to wipe the hands on after either baiting the hook or unhooking the fish.



CHAPTER XII.

THE RUDD.

Habits and Haunts—Tackle and Baits—Flies and Fly-fishing.



DOUBT if there is a more handsome coarse fish than the rudd—

A kind of roach all tinged with gold,
Strong, broad, and thick, most lovely to behold,

as an old writer hath it. Rudd differ from roach in being deeper, more glorious in colouring—resplendent with silver, orange, gold, and red—in the under lip projecting,

while that of the roach overhangs; and in the position of the dorsal fin, which begins on the back, slightly behind the anal fin, while in the roach the dorsal fin is almost over the anal fin. The tail is more forked than that of the roach. It has been supposed—wrongly, I believe—that rudd are hybrids between roach and bream.

Rudd sometimes attain a weight of 4lb., but are not often caught over 1½lb. in English waters. Fishing with a fly one summer's morning in Lough Derg, I had the good fortune to take twenty-nine rudd, which weighed exactly 29lb., and among them were several varying from 2½lb. to 3lb. Rudd are called roach in Ireland. They are widely distributed in the United Kingdom, breed prodigiously fast in ponds and lakes, and are also found in many rivers. They are plentiful in the Norfolk Broads, Slapton Ley, several Irish lakes, and in many ponds. There are some in the Thames, but that river cannot suit them, as they do not seem to increase.

Tackle and Baits for Rudd.—Rudd take the same baits as roach, and may be angled for in an exactly similar manner (see Chapter III.). In ponds I have found paste coloured with red lead a capital bait. I once caught a rudd in the Shannon on a very small perch which I was using as a bait for perch, but the occurrence was decidedly exceptional. Even in well-fished waters these fish are much easier to catch than roach.

The way to obtain the best sport with rudd is to fish for them with an artificial fly. This can only be done when they are shoaling on the shallows, which is usually during hot weather. They can then often be seen moving quietly about with their back fins out of water. They should be very cautiously approached, either by wading, or in a punt or other flat-bottomed craft. The angler should on no account stand up, and should cast as long a line as he conveniently can. I have found the Governor, dressed to Francis Francis' pattern, a very good fly; a moderate-sized red palmer, with a little gold or silver tinsel on the body, is also good. As a matter of fact, rudd are not very particular as to flies. Should artificial flies fail, one or two gentles cast like a fly will often do execution, or the fly can be tipped with a gentle, or may be tied with a short wash-leather or white kid tail. Another good plan is to tie a pair of wings on a sliced hook, and thread a gentle up the bare shank. A few turns of hackle at the head of the fly will do no harm. If a sliced hook is not available, a fine hog's bristle can be bound on to the shank of the hook, which will keep the gentle in its place.

When the fly is cast, it should be drawn slowly through the water towards the angler. If the rudd are on the feed, half a dozen or more fish will follow the fly, making a great wave in the water. The angler should be careful not to strike *until he sees his line commence to tighten*. The fish, when hooked, should be very lightly played, as they have delicate mouths; and care should be taken not to alarm the rest of the shoal.

Rudd are not quite such good eaters as roach.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE BLEAK.

Habits and Haunts—How to Preserve for Spinning Baits—Casting a Gentle—How to Clear a Roach Swim—A Hint to Thames Trout-fishers.



F the river fish which may be said to afford sport to the angler, the bleak is the most insignificant. In some parts of England it is called a tailor, and it is a curious fact that in the south of Germany it is usually termed a *schneider*. In size and appearance bleak are not unlike sprats, but are more silvery, and when seen in the water have a very beautiful tinge of sea green. They are delicate eating, but are rarely caught for the table, their principal use being as spinning baits for trout and pike.* They are found in most of the English rivers containing coarse fish, and are particularly numerous in the Thames. All through the summer they swim in shoals close to the surface, but in the winter are rarely seen. They do not favour very strong or very shallow swims, and the most certain spots to find them are near overhanging trees, where the stream is gentle, and where, of course, small flies are very plentiful. In roach swims they are often a great nuisance, seizing the bait before it can get down to the roach. I have

* To preserve bleak for winter use, dry them on a cloth, and place them in spirits, in a pickle-bottle. At the end of a fortnight change the spirits. If kept a year or two, they get very tough. I am indebted to Mr. Jardine for the knowledge of the advantage of changing the spirits. The first lot of spirits is full of grease out of the fish, and if the baits are left in it, they lose their brilliancy.

already described the best thing to be done under these circumstances (see page 51).

The most artistic way to angle for these pretty little fish is to cast a caddis bait, or a gentle threaded on to a No. 14 hook as if it were a fly, and allow it to sink, striking immediately the line tightens; or the same tackle, with the addition of the smallest possible float, a foot above the hook, will answer as well, or perhaps better. Bleak may also be caught with a very small artificial fly, but ten will be caught on the gentle to one on the fly.

It is sometimes so important to catch a few bleak for bait that the following method for finding out their whereabouts is worth noting. Throw a piece of bread into the stream, and watch it. As soon as it floats near a shoal of bleak it will be attacked on all sides, and nearly lifted out of the water. Of course, every angler knows that this happens when bread is thrown in, but they do not always think to try the plan when they are wildly seeking for the baits which are always (why is it?) most difficult to find when most urgently wanted.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE EEL.

Habits and Haunts—Improved Eel-spear—Angling for Eels—Bucks and Wheels—Bobbing—Sniggling—Snaring—An Irish Method.



WILL not trouble my readers with the controversies which have taken place regarding the different varieties of eels. Modern opinion tends to the view that there is only *one* species of eel, of which species there are, broadly speaking, three varieties in British rivers and lakes—those with broad noses and large mouths, coloured somewhat like tench, and believed by Dr. Day to be sterile females, which have lost the migratory habit; those which have very pointed noses, and are silvery, except on the back; and an eel with a nose of medium dimensions. The silver-bellied, pointed-nosed eels are the best eating, the yellow, broad-nosed ladies being decidedly inferior as an article of diet. I need not describe in detail the appearance of eels, for one or more members of the family may be seen in any fishmonger's during the summer months. They are most interesting fish, and I am greatly tempted to write at some length on their peculiarities. Suffice it, however, to say that they are almost ubiquitous, being found in the great majority of rivers and ponds in the world, except where the cold is extreme; that the silver eels migrate at the end of the summer, unless prevented, to the estuaries of rivers, for the purpose of spawning, most of them remaining in the sea,

and very likely developing into congers; and that the eel-fry, or elvers, ascend rivers in great quantities in the spring. Eels which are confined in ponds and lakes probably spawn, like many other fish, on the bottom.

The only times when the angler has a really good chance of catching eels are on dark nights, or in the daytime when the rivers are muddy from heavy rains, or when the air is heavily charged with electricity, as it usually is before and during thunderstorms. Eels are very susceptible to cold, and do not feed or run much in winter, unless the weather is mild or the water highly coloured. Their haunts in summer are under stones, holes in banks, the submerged roots of trees, the crannies in old camp shedding—in fact, any spot affording cover of some kind or another, and particularly those places where food is to be found, such as the outfall of a drain from a slaughter-house. In the spring, about the time the willows bud, they are fond of lying in masses of weed. They may then be speared by plunging the spear into each likely bank of weed. An old couplet runs:

When the willow comes out in bud,
Then the eels come out of the mud.

In the winter they lie in the mud, and are then also speared, often at haphazard; but if the water is clear, the blow-holes of the eels can be seen, and the spear directed accordingly. The best kind of spear is shown in Fig. 37. This pattern spear, which is not generally known, was, I believe, invented a few years ago by a gentleman living near Cambridge.



FIG. 37.
IMPROVED
EEL-SPEAR.

Angling for Eels is best done with a leger (see page 27) baited with a lobworm. A dead minnow threaded on to a hook is also a good bait. In Lancashire, skinned mice and plucked sparrows are considered good baits. The gut should be strong, and the hook a No. 2 Round Bend. A deep, quiet corner in a weir-pool, near old piles and camp shedding, is a capital place to try at night. Give the eel plenty of time to bite, and as soon as you have him in the boat, or on shore, do not hold him up by the line,

but let him drop on the ground, or floor-boards of the boat, and at once cut the gut close to his nose. The cook will get the hook out when the eel is dead. It is decidedly less trouble to cut the gut, and put on a fresh hook, than to get out the hook yourself. If you *will* do it, have ready a piece of flannel with which to grasp the eel, or wear a woollen glove on the left hand. To kill the eel, sever his backbone, just behind his head, with a penknife; but first, if you conveniently can, give him a sharp blow on the tail, which will have a very quieting effect. Eels, by-the-way, when in a difficulty—such as a creel—invariably try to get out of it tail first. If you want to get a live eel into a basket, induce his tail to enter the receptacle, and the rest of his body will surely follow. This may seem a contradiction to the previous sentence, but is, nevertheless, correct.

I need hardly say that eels may be caught on float-tackle, or, indeed, on any tackle the angler chooses to use for them, provided the bait lies close to or on the ground, where it can be noticed by the fish. Ground-baiting is not often practised for eels, but long-continued feeding is certain to bring them together in one spot. Blood should be introduced into any ground-bait intended for eels. Fresh rabbits' entrails are said to be wonderfully attractive. There are several

Other Methods of Taking Eels, which can hardly be termed angling, but to which I think I ought to refer. The bulk of the English eels sent to market are caught in nets, or huge baskets, which are set out at openings in weirs, or are placed in narrow side streams, and into which the eels tumble, sometimes in thousands, during their migration seawards. Everyone who has visited the upper Thames must be familiar with the picturesque eel-bucks, as they are termed.

Smaller baskets, called wheels, are laid in spots frequented by eels, and, being baited with gudgeon or other small fish, or offal, are entered by the eels when searching about for food.

Long lines arrayed with any number of hooks, from two to two hundred, are also used for taking eels; but as they prove deadly to every kind of fish, unless baited with dead minnows or gudgeons (somehow or other the professional fisherman does not use these two baits, though they are quite as good as worms

for eels), I forbear to give any directions as to their use. Too much is known on the subject of night-lines already.

Bobbing, or clod fishing, is rather good fun in its way, provided we can quite make up our minds that worms do not feel. First catch fifty or a hundred lobworms, and, by means of an extra long darning needle, string them through like beads, from tail to head, on a length of worsted, and join the lengths together. When this worm-necklace is several yards long, coil it up into one large coil, about 10in. in diameter, tie a light cord to it, and fasten the other end of the cord to a pole. I am perhaps, wrong in so pointedly telling the reader to make these preparations, for when a base hireling can be obtained to do the work, his services should certainly be utilised. At a suitable time and place (the latter being where the eels are, the former when the eels are feeding or running), drop the coil of worms in the water, let it just touch the bottom, and wait the course of events. If an eel is about he will bite, and a tug will be felt; then quietly and evenly raise the "clod" of worms out of the water, and, most likely, the eel will be found hanging on, bravely, but foolishly. If you are in a boat, lift him in without letting so much as the tip of his tail touch the side, and drop him into a pail of water. I have seen this plan practised with great success in lakes, at the mouths of small streams, swollen and muddy from the rain.

Sniggling is another queer way of taking eels. It can be followed on hot summer days, when not much else can be done. The tackle consists of a thin stick about 6ft. in length (one end of which turns round like the handle of a walking-stick), a few yards of not too coarse running line, and a stout needle. One end of the line is bound on to the eyed half of the needle in the manner shown in Fig. 38. To use this tackle, the sniggler passes a worm on to the needle, sticks the point of the needle into the bent end of the stick, and then, holding the stick in his right hand and the line in his left hand, he quietly places the worm at the mouths of, and sometimes a little way into, holes



FIG. 38.
SNIGGLING
TACKLE.

in banks, between stones, or cracks in woodwork, or wherever else he thinks an eel is likely to be. As soon as an eel sees the worm, he seizes it, and the needle comes out of the stick. The stick is then removed, and at the end of a minute or two the sniggler pulls the string, and the needle shifts across the poor eel's throat. Then comes a case of pull eel pull sniggler; but the latter usually has the best of it—not through any great display of force, but by keeping up one firm steady pull, which is the great secret of getting eels from their strongholds, both in salt water and fresh. Another plan is to stick 6in. of wire, about as thick as a darning needle, into the end of a straight stick, turn the wire at right angles, and insert the end of it in the head of the worm. Possibly this is the better plan, as the eel can draw the worm off the wire easier than it can pull the needle out of the stick. Of course, the needle is in the worm in both methods.

Not long since, I was told that eels may be snared when the water is very clear and their blow-holes can be seen in the mud. A fine wire noose (softened by being burnt in hay and allowed to cool slowly) is fastened to the end of a stick, and laid exactly over the hole. An assistant then prods the mud just behind the hole with a sharp pointed stick, and, if he goes to work skilfully, wakes up the eel, which puts its head out to see what is the matter. Sometimes the eel is through the noose and away before the snarer has time to jerk up the stick. The operation must require some skill and practice.

Yet another method of taking eels and this chapter is finished. One hot summer's day, I took off my shoes and stockings and joined some juvenile Patlanders, who were turning over large stones which lay in a foot or two of water on the side of a large lake, and stabbed, or tried to stab, the eels, which were underneath, with a kitchen fork, before the poor things had time to scuttle away. Great fun it was too. I believe I caught one eel in about an hour.

CHAPTER XV.

SMALL FRY.

Minnow—Stone Loach or Colloch—Ruffe or Pope—Miller's Thumb or Bullhead—Stickleback.



THE first two fish coming under the term small fry are most useful as bait for trout, perch, and, occasionally for pike and salmon.

Minnows are found in very many of the brooks and rivers of the United Kingdom. They rarely exceed $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length, and in shape and colouring are not unlike a brown trout without the red spots. In the spring, about spawning time, they put on most gorgeous hues. They are found in shallow water. In winter, they leave the rivers to escape the floods, and crowd into ditches and drains. For their wholesale capture for bait, I have given directions on pages 66 and 67. They are easily caught with rod and line, provided the hook is small enough. It frequently happens that hooks of the requisite degree of smallness are not kept in stock at the tackle-shops. The line cannot be too fine, the float too small, nor the fragment of worm on the hook too fragmentary. The angler has only to walk along the river's bank until he sees the minnows, cast in his tackle (first adjusting the float so that the worm escapes the bottom), and success is certain. Minnows are by no means bad eating if cooked *à la* whitebait.

The Stone Loach, or Colloch of Ireland, sometimes also called the colley-bait, lives for the most part under stones in

many of our rivers and brooks, and in a few ponds and lakes. It somewhat resembles the gudgeon in size and colour, but has not the transparent appearance of that excellent little fish. Its nose, also, is much more pointed, and its mouth is adorned with six to ten feelers, or barbules. It is easily captured, the *modus operandi* being to turn over a stone, and catch the shy little fish with the hand, or in a hand-net, or by means of a fork, on which latter method Mr. Blackmore has written charmingly in "Lorna Doone." Loaching requires a certain amount of activity, and is not a suitable amusement for middle-aged gentlemen of majestic proportions. When the stone is turned over, the loach wriggles rather than swims to another hiding place, and if the loacher fails in his first attempt, the loach generally gives him a second opportunity. When loach lie under flat-bottomed stones, a tap with a hammer on the top of the stone will often stun the loach, and conduce to his capture. I have heard that loach may be taken with float tackle and a worm, but have never tried the experiment. Loach are most excellent eating, and are one of the best spinning baits for salmon and large trout.

The Ruffe, or Pope, is a sweet-eating little fish, which rarely exceeds 3oz. or 4oz. in weight. It is a member of the perch family, and is shaped almost exactly like the common perch, but is marked and coloured very much like a gudgeon. It takes the usual perch baits with avidity, and may be easily taken on light gudgeon-tackle baited with worms. It will usually be found in more quiet swims than those frequented by gudgeon, and rather on the edge of the stream than in it. When caught, it should be handled with care, as the gill-covers are pointed, and can inflict unpleasant wounds. It gives off a nasty slime when handled. Pope are river fish, but are occasionally found in lakes.

The Miller's Thumb, or Bullhead, is a monstrosity among fresh-water fish, four-fifths of its body being a flat, sprawling head, likened, probably, to the miller's thumb because that useful member of the man of flour is supposed to spread from constantly feeling samples of meal. Miller's thumbs (the fish) are found principally under stones in rivers and brooks, and,

occasionally, in shallow water. They eat almost everything eatable that is not too large for them to swallow, and I have heard that they are not bad eating themselves. Village urchins sometimes angle for these peculiar beings by placing a hook baited with a worm right under the stone where a bullhead is lying. The better plan is to lift up the stone, and extract the bullhead with the hand before he has time to flee.

The Stickleback.—Of these ubiquitous little fish there are six varieties. They are all more or less armed with bony plates along their sides, and spines on back and belly. They are found in almost every ditch, river, and lake in the United Kingdom, and rarely exceed $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length. On rivers, they live for the most part out of the stream—on muddy shallows. They are interesting fish to keep in an aquarium, building a kind of nest, in which the female deposits her eggs, and at the door of which the male keeps guard. They are as voracious as the bullhead, and are *very* harmful, from the amount of fish spawn and fry which they devour. They are easily caught by means of a worm tied, at the middle, to a piece of cotton. As soon as the stickleback has swallowed half the worm (the proceeding can be watched), pull him up gently. He will not leave go.

CHAPTER XVI.

FISH NOT COMMONLY CAUGHT BY FRESH-WATER ANGLERS.

*Lamprey—Flounder—Burbolt or Burbot—Azurine Roach—
Vendace—Powan—Pollan—Gwyniad—Graining.*



THIS chapter, of course, includes, not only rare fish, but those not commonly caught by anglers.

The Lamprey is a peculiar, migratory fish, in shape very similar to an eel; but in lieu of a mouth it has a sucking apparatus, with which it holds on to stones at the bottoms of rivers. There are several varieties of this fish, one of which—the sea lamprey—is deemed an edible luxury. The lampern is a small, migratory kind of lamprey, which makes an excellent bait for turbot, and is also used for trailing or whiffing in the sea. It is sometimes taken by trout, chub, barbel, and eels. A small variety of lamprey, termed the pride or mud lamprey, does not appear to migrate.

The Flounder is a little flat-fish, which is usually found in the brackish water of estuaries, but sometimes makes its way up rivers into perfectly fresh water. It is easily taken on a leger baited with a lobworm, and, indeed, will take most of the baits used by the bottom fisher. It prefers quiet streams, where the bottom is a sandy mud. Flounders begin life swimming on edge like roach or bream, with an eye on each side of the head; but in a month or two, they flap along the bottom on one side like other flat-fish, and both eyes come on to the upper side.

The Burbolt, Burbot, or Eel Pout, is, in appearance, something between an eel and a cod-fish. It is rare, except in a few rivers on the East Coast. It sometimes attains a weight of 8lb., though the average weight is about 1½lb. It is the only member of the cod family found in fresh water, and may be

known by its solitary barbule, its slender, elongated shape, and long, solitary anal fin. Living mostly on muddy bottoms, and feeding principally at night, it is more often taken in eel-baskets and on night-lines, than by the angler. This fish is fairly good eating during the autumn and winter months.

The Azurine, incorrectly termed the blue roach, is a beautiful and exceedingly rare variety of rudd only found in a few localities. Its back is slate blue, and its belly and fins are white. It has, says Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, been angled for and caught on carp baits.

The Vendace is a member of the salmon tribe. It has an adipose fin, and breeds in autumn and winter. It attains a length of 9in., and is greenish blue or black on the upper half of the body, with belly silver, a glint of gold on sides, and dark fins. This and the three following fish are very similar in appearance, and are sometimes called fresh-water herrings. The vendace is found in certain lakes near Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, in Derwentwater and the Bassenthwaite Lakes. It is only to be taken in nets. An interesting account of the vendace appeared in the *Edinburgh Journal of Natural and Geographical Science*, and in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*. Extracts from these articles will be found in Keene's "Practical Fisherman."

Powan are silvery little members of the salmon tribe, which are found in great numbers in Loch Lomond, and, doubtless, in some other large lakes. There is no record, so far as I know, of these fish having been taken by the angler.

The Pollan, also a member of the salmon family, is very similar to the powan. Tons of these fish are netted in some of the large Irish lakes during the year, and sent to England, where they are sold as "Irish grayling." The pollan grows to about 10in. or 12in. in length, swims in shoals, and is supposed to feed on fresh-water shrimps. It will occasionally take the artificial fly. When swimming near the surface, a shoal of these fish will cause a peculiar ripple in the water. Once, after vainly fishing one of these ripples with a fly, I fired a small shot-gun at the edge of the shoal, and picked off a solitary fish. It ate very like a herring, but was more delicate, and less oily. A fine line,

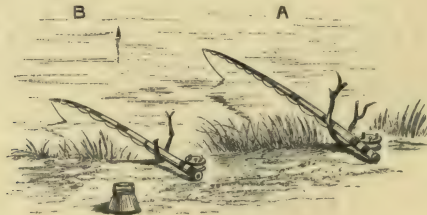
baited with fresh-water shrimps, and buoyed with small fragments of cork, might, very likely, take pollan when they are swimming near the surface.

The Gwyniad is a member of the salmon tribe, so like the powan, pollan, and vendace, as to have been supposed, by some naturalists, to be identical with them. It is found in several of the Cumberland lakes, and in Wales. There is, I believe, no known method of catching this fish with hook and line.

The Graining is an exceedingly rare variety of dace, being only found in the Mersey, the Alt (Lancashire), the Leam, at Leamington, and some streams in the townships of Burton Wood and Sankey. It is said to be somewhat like a dace, but with a more rounded nose; the upper part of the head and body is drab tinged with red; the cheeks and gill-covers are a silver yellowish-white, and the fins are a pale yellowish-white. The graining rises to a fly, but the redworm is a more killing bait. Yarrell's specimens of graining in the British Museum are, so Dr. Day tells me, undoubted examples of dace.

In addition to the above, there is a sea-fish—the **Shad**—which visits a few of our rivers for a short time in the spring months, for spawning purposes. There are two varieties of this fish found off the British coasts, the twaite and allice shad. I consider shad excellent eating. They have a distinct salmon flavour.

I have given but scanty information in this chapter, for the simple and all-sufficient reason that the fish mentioned are of small account to anglers. All the British coarse fish have now been treated of, the pike excepted, to which most sport-giving fish the second division of this work is devoted.



DIVISION II.

ANGLING FOR PIKE.



Angling for Pike.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Appearance — Local Names — Rate of Growth — Size — Food — Voracity — Edible Qualities — Growing Scarcity — Necessity for Fish-culture — A Breeding-pond — Haunts and Habits in Summer and Winter — General Remarks on Pike-fishing.



THE pike is in many respects a remarkable fish. In appearance it differs in a striking degree from any other of the fresh-water species, and in shape and colouring is particularly adapted for a life among weeds, reeds, and rushes. What form could quicker dart through a weed-bed than that long body and sharp snout, propelled by vigorous movements of the broad tail, the action of which is assisted by a large anal fin, and a dorsal fin, placed well back? What colour could less betray his whereabouts to the unfortunate fish on which he feeds, or (when he is young) to other pike who only await the chance to feed on him, than that dark-green back, shading to white on the belly, with yellow markings on the sides? His mouth verily bristles with teeth—long, sharp-pointed ones on the edge of the lower jaw, which can inflict nasty wounds, and hundreds of smaller ones on the roof of his mouth, which slant towards his throat, and take a deadly hold on his prey. Truly has he been termed fresh-water shark, and wolf, tyrant, devastator, and other well-

deserved names. Look at him gazing up with his wicked eyes from the well of the punt! If looks mean anything, that expression says, as plainly as possible, "I'd like to eat *you*!"

Jack, pickerel, luce, gedd or gade (Lowlands of Scotland), gullet (Northumberland), haked (Cambridgeshire), are some of the names borne by the pike. Jack is the name most commonly used in the Midlands and Southern counties of England, "pike" being only applied to fish of considerable size. In Ireland and Scotland, pike is the more common name for fish of all sizes, a jack being understood by Southerners to be a pike of small size. Many writers have attempted to define the exact weight at which the jack ends and the pike begins. As a matter of fact, the names which are popular and not scientific are constantly used far too loosely for any accurate definition to be possible. Luce and pickerel are old English words which are not often heard now.

Nothing certain is known concerning the growth-rate of pike, probably for the simple reason that there is nothing certain to know. The growth of most kinds of fish depends chiefly on the amount of food they can obtain. For instance, a trout in a Devonshire brook may, at the end of three years, be not above $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. in weight—probably much less—whereas, had he been placed at an early age in a Hampshire river where fish-food is abundant, he would in the same time have at least attained treble that weight. There is a record of a pike kept in the Zoological Gardens which only increased $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. in ten years! Under favourable circumstances, there is no doubt that pike gain weight very rapidly, especially during the first few years of their existence; they eat enormously, and their growth-rate corresponds to their appetites. In "The Book of the Pike" is recorded how eight pike, of about 5lb. each, once ate nearly 800 gudgeon in three weeks, and that the appetite of one of them was almost insatiable. Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, the author of the work referred to, gives it as his opinion that, in open waters, the maximum growth during the first year does not much exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., seldom averages more than 1lb. a year during the first two years, and from $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to 2lb. a year afterwards, decreasing again, after eight or nine years, to about 1lb. a year.

As to the size pike attain—here I must lay down my pen and consider a moment. First, I will say that I believe seven-eighths the stories about big pike to be untrue; secondly, that one or two immense pike may have been taken, but that, with one exception,* no skeleton, cast, or head of a giant pike is in existence. Of late years, no pike is known to have been taken weighing 40lb. or over. The largest pike I ever felt quite satisfied about were two caught in England by Mr. Alfred Jardine, which weighed 37lb. and 36lb. respectively, and were exhibited a few years back at the Fisheries Exhibition, South Kensington.† The largest pike I ever killed weighed 25lb. two days after it was caught, and fell a victim to a Thames bleak (one of a bottle-full which I had exported in spirits of wine to Ireland), mounted on a Chapman spinner. Twice I have hooked pike about the same size in the Thames, but with unpleasant results. I am convinced that half the tales of big pike arise from want of a proper weighing-machine. Unless a railway station is handy, or the angler possesses a spring balance which will weigh over 30lb. or 40lb., as often as not the weight of the pike has to be guessed—and we all know what that means. Again, however fast fish may grow in the water, it is an unquestionable fact that they grow very much faster after they have been hooked, played, and landed. If pike weighing from 70lb. to 100lb. were so common a century or more ago, why is it we are never gratified with the *sight* of even a forty-pounder nowadays? Photographs of large fish give no accurate idea of their size, unless a measure or some article of known size—*e.g.*, a postage stamp—is photographed with them.

* The head of a pike measuring 9in. across is preserved in Kenmure Castle, co. Galway. The recorded weight of this fish is 72lb.

† Mr. Jardine has kindly furnished me with the following details concerning some of his largest pike: "My 37lb. pike," he writes, "was caught on Nov. 4th, 1879, in Buckinghamshire. Measurements: Extreme length, 47in.; length, eye to tail, 39in.; length of head, 13in.; girth, 25in.; caught on my snap tackle, with large live dace for bait. On Jan. 24th, 1877, near Maidstone, in Kent, I caught a 36lb. pike. Extreme length, 46in.; length, eye to tail, 38in.; length of head, 12½in.; girth, 25in.; bait, a large live roach, on my snap tackle. Frank Buckland made two casts of this fish: one is in the Buckland Museum, South Kensington; the other, exquisitely painted by H. L. Rolfe, is in my possession. On Feb. 25th, 1882, in Sussex, I caught, on a gut paternoster, with a very small live dace, a 31lb. female pike, of most elegant shape and exquisite condition and colourings. Extreme length, 44in.; length, eye to tail, 36½in.; length of head, 11in.; girth, 24in."

Pike are anything but vegetarians. During infancy they feed on worms, small fry, and the ordinary coarse fish-food, but after the first year there is no fish of swallowable size safe from their attack: the young of waterfowl—and not unfrequently the old birds too—rats, mice, and, in fact, every living thing that moves on or in the water, which is not too large, will serve them as a meal. Some things they naturally like better than others. Tench they certainly do not like, but, at the same time, will occasionally eat them.* Perch, which many writers have asserted to be too prickly for a pike to swallow, are in some places used as a bait *without* the back fin being removed. I once opened a jack weighing about 5lb. which had in its interior no less than four perch of between $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. each. Occasionally a good-sized pike will condescend to a worm, and I have twice caught small ones on cheese when fishing for chub with Nottingham tackle. There are fairly well authenticated instances of pike rising at swallows skimming the surface of the water, and an Irishman told me he lost a snipe which fell into the water, and was seized by a pike before his dog could reach it. Once I took a small pike on a lake trout-fly, but this was in very shallow water. I shall, of course, have more to say concerning the favourite food of these fish when I come to the subject of baits.

I have already hinted at the voracity of pike. When really hungry they will stick at nothing. Often and often has the indiscriminating fish seized the live-bait angler's gaudily-coloured cork float, and ignored the less noticeable but more toothsome fish-bait swimming only a few feet beneath it. Boys have been attacked when bathing, horses seized by the nose when drinking, and even the wily fox has been caught by the still more wily pike. Ah me, what good stories has his pikeship afforded us! Some of them are true, most are not; but they one and all create amusement, and some-

* In the *Fishing Gazette* of 23rd Jan., 1886, Mr. Richardson, of Grantham, stated that he had recently taken a pike weighing 23lb. 10oz. on a $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. tench. Mr. Jardine tells me that Saunders, the well-known taxidermist, took from the bellies of three pike, which weighed 60lb., several large tench weighing between 2lb. and 3lb. each. The pike were taken at Kingsfleet, where there is little else but tench for them to eat.

times amazement and awe. Those that have already appeared in print do not require repetition; but I will give an instance of a pike's voracity, for the truth of which I really can vouch. In August, 1879, I was spinning in Scariff Bay, Lough Derg. My bait was a 3½in. spoon—an exceptionally large one. I had a run, played and landed the fish, and found it to be a pike weighing exactly 3lb. The tail of a trout was sticking out of its mouth. I pulled out the trout, and found it had only just been swallowed, and was so little damaged that we had it for dinner that evening. The pike without the trout weighed only 2lb., and the trout consequently weighed 1lb. Thus, the hungry beast after having in its maw a fish weighing half as much as itself, the tail of which had not had time to disappear, actually seized a large spoon-bait representing a fish weighing ½lb. or more. The weights I have given were most carefully taken.

Pike are good or bad to eat according to the water they come out of, the season, the skill and humour of the cook, and the fashion of the day. At present pike are not held in high esteem for the table, but the time was when they were apparently deemed a great luxury. For instance, in the reign of Edward I. they were more costly than salmon, and many times more valuable than cod or turbot. The best pike I have eaten came out of the Shannon lakes, some of them having a curd such as one finds in a freshly-caught salmon. I never saw this curd in an English pike. The next best fish of the kind I have tasted came out of the Hampshire Avon; and close upon these followed the jack of the Thames and the Bedfordshire Ouse. Pond pike are bad eating, so far as my experience goes. Given abundance of food and water, and a gravelly or rocky bottom, pike are worth cooking. Then their flesh is flaky and firm, not unlike that of cod, and the flavour is delicate. Small pike are an abomination on the dinner-table, on account of their three-pronged bones, which are out of all proportion to their flesh. Fish of 4lb. should be deemed the minimum size for the table. In Lough Derg, where the pike must spawn very early, I found them in first-rate condition in May. In the Thames, pike-fishing does not

begin until June 16th, which is all too soon, and the fish are not worth eating until the middle of July at the earliest.

Much, as I have hinted, depends on the cooking. I have enjoyed pike which had been simply plain boiled (*on the day they were killed*), and served up with oyster sauce; but for this simple mode of preparation they should be in the prime condition. Abundance of salt should be boiled with them, and they are improved by crimping—*i.e.*, making deep cuts across the back, at intervals of 2in., as soon as the fish has been landed and knocked on the head. While the blood is flowing the fish should be held in the water. Baking is a very favourite method of cooking pike. The main points about it are a good stuffing for the fish, a rich brown gravy flavoured with port wine, and a piece of flare laid over the fish, to keep it moist all the time it is cooking. Too often, alas! baked pike are dried up by ignorant or careless cooks, and the dish is spoiled. The best way to bake a pike is to roast it in a tin before the fire. I learned this in Ireland. The fish can then be properly basted. A thick slice of pike, egged, bread-crumbed, and fried in *butter*, is also very good. Many a panful of such cutlets have I fried when out on fishing excursions. Very good fish-cakes and kedgeriee can be made from pike; and there are many other ways of cooking this fish, which for lack of space I am unable to notice.*

Pike, though found in a large number of rivers and lakes in the United Kingdom,† are, I am very sorry to say, getting scarcer every year. As a matter of fact, really good pike-fishing, except in a few preserves, and in some remote places in Ireland and Scotland, is not to be obtained. The reason is not far to seek: As anglers have increased, pike have decreased. Not only are anglers more numerous, but they are also much more skilful than in former years, and in any water in which there are pike to catch, caught they certainly will be if our friend *Piscator* is given an opportunity. At one time wire and a hempen cord was the common tackle for

* Mr. Jardine tells me that he considers kippered pike superior to the bulk of spent fish—*i.e.*, kippers—which are sold as kippered salmon. Pike should be kippered in autumn and winter, when in their best condition.

† They are absent from the Isle of Wight.

pike; now we use salmon-gut, with a fragment of fine patent gimp near the hook, and sometimes fish even still finer. Is it surprising that pike are becoming scarce? Something must be done, or soon there will be none left, which would be almost a national calamity, for the pike is invariably a fine sporting fish in rivers, and, though not quite so game in lakes and ponds, is, wherever he may be hooked, a gallant and sturdy fighter.

To preserve our remaining pike three points should be attended to: In the first place, the most stringent regulations are necessary concerning the return to the water of fish caught under a certain size, which should be fixed at not less than 4lb. I most earnestly beg of any angler who reads these lines to return to the water any jack he catches under that weight; he will have had the pleasure of playing and landing the fish, and in leaving it to grow large he will be acting in a most commendable manner. A $3\frac{1}{2}$ lb. pike is nothing to be proud of, or to show one's friends, while the pride which fills the bosom of the man who feels he has done a virtuous and sportsmanlike action should, and no doubt will, far outweigh any trifling regret he may feel at giving up his prey. Secondly, owners of pike-fisheries should have their ditches most carefully watched during the early months of the year, when the pike run up them to spawn, and when many a fine fish falls victim to the deadly wire noose passed over his pointed head by the farm labourer.

But more must be done than this: pike must be bred artificially. At present, I believe, fish-culturists know next to nothing about pike-breeding; but the thing is surely to be accomplished, and that without difficulty. I would suggest to anyone having the opportunity a trial of the following experiment: Make a long, narrow pond, say 90ft. long by 20ft. wide, and about 6ft. or 7ft. deep; divide it into three unequal parts—A, B, and C (see Fig. 1)—and from each part dig narrow ditches—similar to those in which pike spawn—and in them plant numerous water-weeds. In the early spring, just before the fish are thinking of leaving for their spawning-grounds, bring nets into requisition, and catch as many pike

as possible. Then sort them. Put those between 2lb. and 3lb. into division A, those between 3lb. and 5lb. into B, and those above that size into C, of course taking care that the males and females are equal in numbers. If any coarse fish—roach, dace, gudgeon, &c.—have been caught in the nets, turn them into the ponds for the pike to feed on. In a few weeks the pike should run up the ditches to spawn, and then return to the pond. As soon as that happens, the ponds should be netted, and the fish returned to the river.

If the ditches are made and planted with weeds about eight or ten months before they are required, there should be abundance of food for the young pike when first hatched.

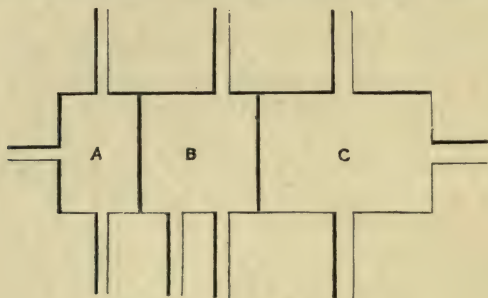


FIG. 1. A PIKE BREEDING POND.

As they grow they will require minnows and other small fry, which must be obtained for them; and I have no doubt that they would eat chopped liver quite as readily as do young trout. The pikelets might be left in the pond for at least ten months, when they could be turned into lakes or rivers in very shallow, weedy spots. It will be found most convenient to construct the pond with an outlet at the deepest part, so that the water can be easily drained off. That, briefly, is a plan which I have long had in my head for pike-breeding. It has never, so far as I know, been tried, but I sincerely hope that the publicity now given to it will lead to something of the kind being done. For a man of means, living in the country, pike-breeding would be a novel and inte-

resting amusement. If carried out on commercial principles, it would probably pay as well as, or even better than, trout-breeding, for there are many waters in England well adapted for pike, but which, for the simple reason that no young pike are to be bought, are being stocked with trout, with very unsatisfactory results. Of course, in a trout-stream or salmon-river pike should be unmercifully destroyed, or, better, transported elsewhere; but in slow-flowing rivers, and in weedy, reedy lakes, by all means preserve and increase the breed of pike.

I have already referred to some of the habits of pike, particularly as to their voracity and food. Pike spawn early in the year, the young fish earlier than those of larger size. In some waters the time of spawning will be a month or more sooner than in others. As a rule, pike lead a solitary existence, only pairing for breeding purposes. The spawn is deposited among weeds in ditches and quiet backwaters. After this operation the fish return to the river very lean and hungry, and for a time feed most ravenously. They are then easily caught, and their flesh is nasty and unwholesome—hence the wisdom of a close season. In the winter, pike are sometimes found in shoals; but it would be more correct to say that a number of solitary individuals have chosen one spot for their abode, than that they have formed a shoal, the surroundings, and not the society, bringing them together.

The Haunts of Pike in rivers may be briefly described as among weeds *in or on the edge of the stream*, in summer; backwaters, eddies, and quiet places below islands, in winter. In very small streams they will, as a rule, be found in the deepest water all through the season, and every hole at a bend may be expected to contain a fish. The best way by which I can give my readers an idea of where they should fish for pike in rivers, is to take them with me in a punt down some such stream as that shown in my sketch (Fig. 2). It is not altogether a fancy picture, but a combination of “pikey” bits of the Upper Thames with which I am well acquainted. We will pay the river two visits—one in August, the other in January—and will thus be able to note the difference in the position of the fish in

summer and winter. I have placed letters and figures in my sketch, to which I will refer.

As we really hope to catch a pike or two, and as it is the hottest month of the year, we wisely meet at the boathouse at

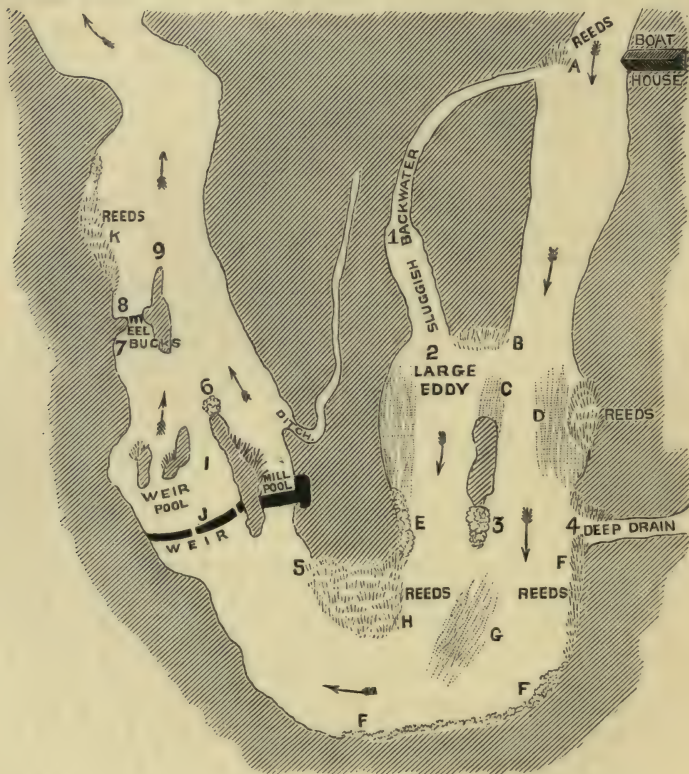


FIG. 2. A PIKE RIVER.

the top of the water, just as the clock in the old church tower chimes the hour of six. The dew is still on the grass, but we are none too soon, for, even as we take our seats in the punt, several pairs of bleak leap repeatedly out of the water 2ft. or

more at a time, evidently in the endeavour to get away from some feeding pike or perch. Why do bleak always jump in pairs, I wonder? In the water they all appear to mix indiscriminately; but when pursued, they leap side by side, like well-matched steeplechasers taking their hurdles together. Immediately opposite the boathouse a narrow backwater leaves the main stream; but this we do not propose to fish now, for it is choked with weeds, the water hardly moves through it, and it contains at this season very few pike. At the mouth of the backwater, however, is a small clump of reeds (A), one side of which is washed by the main stream. Here is a likely spot, and we therefore fish close round the reeds, and soon lure out a jack of about 5lb. We now pass down the river for some little distance without fishing, for the stream here is swift, and the bottom clear of weeds; but on reaching the tail of the large island another little clump of rushes (B) is noticed, round which we fish most carefully, and hook a small jack on the side next the main stream. A little below us is another island, above which, for about 20yds., is a fine bed of weeds (C). These do not reach to the surface of the water, and, mooring our punt at the head of them, we send a live bait on float-tackle roaming over them. We have two runs, and bring another fish to basket. To the left of us the bank is lined with reeds, and outside the reeds is a bed of weeds (D) very similar to those we have just been fishing. This is a very stronghold of pike in summer, and we determine to put a spinning bait over it, for the weeds do not reach the surface.

Quietly the punt is let down the stream, and we fish every inch of water by the side of the reeds, and over the weeds. Nor are we disappointed, two more nice-sized jack joining their companions in the well. We next retrace our steps a little—go round the head of the island, and let our float-tackle drift down the right-hand channel, taking care that our floats pass as close as possible to the weeds (E) which fringe the bank on the right. Here we get no fish; but the spot was worth trying. We then cross the river, and continue float-fishing along the weeds (F, F, F) which fringe the opposite bank; or, I should say, that one of us live-baits, while another takes casts with his spinning bait half across the river. The live-baiter catches one jack

in the bend, and a fish seizes the spinner's bait just as it is passing over some sunken weeds (G) which lie out in the centre of the stream.

We have now reached a very sharp bend in the river, and on and skirting the point of land opposite to us is a large bed of reeds (H). Through the outskirts of these a gentle stream flows, and so among them we fish with suitable tackle, taking advantage of every clear nook into which a bait can be dropped, but always being careful not to fish any dead water; for though there may be a few pike in still water at this time of year, there are many more in or on the edge of the stream, and where the most jack are it is best policy to fish. Having well worked the outskirts of this reed-bed, and caught three more pike—one a fine fellow, weighing, let us say, 15lb.—I punt slowly down to the mill, and we join the jolly miller in his midday meal.

The weir-pool (I) is surrounded by trees, and full of shady nooks—the very place to fish on a hot summer's day; so in the afternoon, while one of us whips for dace—our supply of baits being rather small—another fishes a number of weedy corners, which often contain jack, and meets with some success. To describe the weir-pool in detail would be difficult and tedious. Suffice it to say that wherever there is stream and weeds or reeds combined, there is a chance of a jack, provided, of course, the water is not too shallow. I cast my bait, on well-leaded tackle, right into the rush of water known on the Thames as the “lasher.” There I catch a pike of some size, for the swift stream is only near the surface, the water being quiet enough near the bottom for a jack to lie. I also manage to take a fish to the right of the lasher, close by the moss-covered piles (J) of the weir. In the evening we punt down below the eel-bucks, and fish the reeds (K) on the left, by the edge of which we catch the fish of the day—a splendid pike of at least 20lb. Evening is now closing in, so, well satisfied with our day's sport, we moor the punt to the bank—leaving her for an obliging miller's man to take back to the boathouse—turn out of the well into the river all the jack except the two largest and one which we send up to the mill-house, and stroll slowly home across the water-meadows.

It should be noticed that during this summer day's pike-

fishing we almost invariably fish near weeds or reeds, and always in moving water, altogether leaving unfished the eddies and lay-bys.

Six months later we are at the boathouse again ; but not at 6 a.m. No ; 10 o'clock is soon enough to begin pike-fishing in winter. It is a bright January day, and we are favoured with a soft south wind—not sufficient to find its way through our clothing, and make us feel chilly, but quite enough to ruffle the surface of the now fast-running river. The brilliant green and yellow tints of summer have disappeared, and in their place are the more subdued, but hardly less lovely, colours which Nature puts on after the fall of the leaf. Most of the weeds have died down, and been swept away by the first flood of autumn ; but the reeds, now broken and withered, still mark the spots where we caught the fish that day in August. The river is, of course, higher than in summer, and runs swiftly by the boathouse.

We start by punting across the river to the backwater, down which we pass for some distance, only coming to a halt where it widens out (1), and deepens considerably. Jack often run up the mouth of this stream, so we carefully fish the lower portion of it, and soon our well is not without a tenant. The next place to fish is the large eddy (2), and we spend some time in it, for fish often collect here in considerable numbers. I need not further describe in detail the sport we obtain, as it will be sufficient for my purpose to point out the spots we fish. From the eddy we go to the tail of the island (3), a few yards farther down stream. Here were weeds in summer, but now the bottom is clear and the water quiet. From the tail of the island we cross over to the deep drain (4), a piece of still water, up which numbers of jack run for shelter during any great flood, and where (being a spawning-ground) they are often to be found at the close of the season. A recent flood has stocked this drain, and few, if any, fish have left it, and we do not regret giving it a trial. We next push some little distance down the river, and fish for some time below the large reed-bed (5) at the point. This is a quiet corner, sheltered from the stream by the *débris* of the reeds, and generally holds a fish or two.

We then go to the mill, borrow the miller's punt, and fish for a short time at the tail of the mill island (6). Thence we pass on to another island, and fish a deep hole (7) just above the eel-bucks, some quiet water below them (8), and also at the tail of the island (9); after which we go home with glorious appetites, and the wherewith to satisfy them.

On the day I have described the river is rather high, and slightly coloured—in fact, in its most favourable condition for winter pike-fishing. If it were much lower, we should be inclined to fish more in the stream, and not quite so much in the eddies; and if the water were very thick, we should leave the very deep holes unfished.

Pike-fishing usually ends on March 15th, and in rivers the fish often bite best during the last fortnight of the season. They are then chiefly to be found at the mouths of ditches and drains, up which they will go a few weeks later for the purpose of spawning. The mouth of the deep drain marked 4 on my sketch would then, as I have said, be a suitable place to look for them, and also the mouth of the ditch shown on the right hand of the mill-tail. As a matter of fact, good sport may be expected with the pike any day between October and the end of the season, provided the weeds have rotted and been swept away by a flood, and the river is not over its banks, and neither muddy nor very bright. The best fishing is obtained when the water is slightly coloured.

In lakes and ponds, as in rivers, pike are found among and close to weeds, reeds, and rushes, and in winter, when the weeds are absent, in deep rather than shallow water. In hot weather they often lie close to the surface. In very large lakes, with rocky shores and few weeds, the best pike will often be found close to the shore, provided only the water is tolerably deep. In ponds they may be looked for anywhere, when well on the feed, and roaming about for food.*

It has always seemed to me that there are three kinds of

* When a pond or lake is surrounded by weeds and reeds, it is sometimes a good plan to beat the water near the banks a few hours before fishing. Or a dog may be sent among the reeds. This is to drive the pike out into the clear water. Notwithstanding the fright they receive, they often feed well after this treatment. At the same time, I do not recommend this plan very strongly, and only follow it under exceptional circumstances.

pike-fishing days. First, when the pike are madly on the feed, and prowls about for food, when they are sometimes caught in very unlikely places; second, when they are only moderately hungry, and do not take a bait unless it is brought close to their lair in the weeds; and third, when they refuse to look at a bait, even if put before their noses. It has been stated that a pike in the third stage may be caught if the bait is dropped behind him, on his tail—that, in anger, he turns and seizes it. I have never tried the experiment.

Wind is very desirable in pike-fishing, especially when the water is low and bright. A good blustering October gale sometimes seems to rouse up the pike and set them feeding; but the great advantage of wind is that it ruffles the surface of the water, and thus partially hides the angler and his tackle from the keen eyes of the fish. In summer, if the wind is blowing across a river or lake, the angler should, and will usually, have the best sport on the side most affected by the wind. On a blazing hot summer's day, when not a leaf is stirring, good fishing must not be expected, though it will sometimes be obtained. In hot weather the angler cannot commence pike-fishing too soon after sunrise.

A hard frost is, in my opinion, favourable to jack-fishing in rivers, many of the best days I have had being when the banks of the river were lined with ice, and every few minutes the line froze to the rings. Fishing under such circumstances is not so unpleasant as might be imagined, provided there is no cold, searching wind, and the pike are hungry. Of course, one can hardly dress too warmly in such weather. In lakes and ponds pike do not, as a general rule (to which there are many exceptions), feed well during hard frosts; but a rise of the thermometer for a couple of hours in the middle of the day will often set them raging after food.

It is next to impossible to lay down more definite rules than the foregoing as to the best weather for pike-fishing. The fish are most uncertain in their feeding. On days which appear everything a fisherman could desire, none are caught, while good sport is sometimes had when it is least expected. However, I think I may commit myself to the following statements: In

summer, no time is so good as early morning, from soon after daybreak up to eight or nine o'clock; the next best time is the evening. In frosty weather pike usually bite for two or three hours only during the day—generally some time between eleven and three. Windy days, especially in summer, afford better sport, as a rule, than calm ones. When rivers are clearing after a flood, the fish may be expected to bite better than at any other time. Cloud is decidedly good in summer, if there is no wind; but on windy days sunshine is certainly preferable. In winter, take as much sunshine as you can get, unless it be on one of those exceptional occasions when the water is very low and very clear.

For the benefit of those of my readers who have absolutely no knowledge of jack-fishing, it will, I think, be as well for me to give here a slight sketch of the various methods employed, and explain under what circumstances they are respectively useful. Let me, first of all, point out that the jack of the present day have in many rivers become almost as highly educated as trout, and that the coarse gimp or wire tackle which our ancestors used has had to give way to tackle in which salmon-gut, in a great measure, takes the place of gimp. Even salmon-gut will, I feel assured, be found too coarse for the pike of the future. Indeed, I am by no means certain that the time has not arrived when what is known as lake-trout gut should be used in Thames jack-fishing. As to this I will tell a fish story—a true one—and leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Some three or four winters ago I punted down to Hambleton Lock, below Henley, and passing through the lock, moored my punt at the top of a well-known hole famous for pike and perch in winter. It was not a large place, and required fishing carefully, so I put out a lively dace on ordinary jack float-tackle, with very fine gimp close to the bait, and above that salmon-gut. The bait worked beautifully, and went over every portion of the hole, but no jack seized it. At the end of an hour I determined to see if the perch were feeding, so put up another rod, and fished for perch with a two-hook paternoster of the finest undrawn gut, baited with minnows. I had no

bites from perch, but hooked and landed several jack, all about the same size—3lb. to 4lb. Meanwhile, my dace on ordinary, or, rather, very fine, jack-tackle was utterly ignored. The following day I went to the same spot, and exactly the same thing occurred. I went again on the third day, caught one more jack, and hooked another which bit the gut, and apparently broke the spell, for not another jack could I catch. During these three days the dace on the ordinary jack-tackle was untouched by the fish. Now, was this mere chance or accident? I think not. I forget the exact number of jack I took—about eight or ten, I fancy. It was a most remarkable thing catching so many jack running on a small hook mounted on gut, without being bitten through; but I have not told the story to call attention to that point, but to show the advantage, or, rather, the necessity, of fine tackle. I may add that, though this occurred in winter, the water was fairly clear.

Jack, as I have already said, feed for the most part on fish, and fish, dead or alive, are the baits generally used by jack-fishers. Live-baits are commonly used either suspended in mid-water by means of a float or attached to a paternoster, which is a length of gut with a weight at the end of it, and a hook, on a few inches of gimp, sticking out at right angles to the gut, 1ft. or more above the lead; or they may be placed on a leger, a tackle in effect much the same as the paternoster, but with the bait at the end of the line, and the lead above it. Dead fish-baits, of course, have to be worked to give them some semblance of life, and are either spun or trolled. To make them spin, they are fixed into such a shape that they revolve when drawn through the water, or have a piece of mechanism attached which has the same effect, and are then either cast out long distances and drawn back to the angler, or simply trailed after a boat, which latter process is known on the Thames as trailing, but on Irish and Scotch lakes as trolling. Strictly speaking, the word trolling should be limited to the use of a dead-bait in quite a different manner. A trolling-bait does not spin, but is merely dropped into the water, when—containing a lead—it shoots to the bottom, and is drawn up by the angler.

A word now as to hooks. These either project, and are intended to be struck into the pike's mouth immediately he seizes the bait, or lie close to the bait, with which they are swallowed, the pike being hooked somewhere below the throat—a cruel plan, not much followed in the present day. The first-mentioned arrangements are termed *snap-hooks*, the latter *gorge-hooks*. Spinning baits are always furnished with snap-hooks, but in the other methods mentioned either gorge or snap-hooks can be used. The methods to be followed are then either:

Live-baiting ..	{	Float-fishing	{ with snap-tackle. with semi-gorge-tackle. with gorge-tackle.
		Paternostering	{ with snap-tackle. with gorge-tackle (rarely or never used).
		Legering	{ with snap-tackle. with gorge-tackle (rarely or never used).
Dead-baiting ..	{	Spinning with natural or artificial baits.	
		Trolling	{ with gorge-hook. with snap-tackle.

There are various modifications of these methods, which I will describe later on; and there is a thing called a pike-fly, which, in some waters, is cast or dragged over shallows or sunken weeds, but it is by no means commonly used.

Of the five methods mentioned, some anglers stick to one, some to another; but the "all-round angler" should, I venture to submit, become an adept at them all, and follow the particular method which is most suited to the water he happens to be fishing.

In a very weedy stream it is obvious that to spin a bait decorated with hooks would be futile; while to send a live-bait, suspended from a float, among the weeds, would be equally useless. No; the thing to do is to paternoster if we have the necessary live-baits, or to troll if our baits are dead. If the water is so excessively weedy that there are not even openings large enough for a bait to work clear on the paternoster, or for a trolling-bait, with snap-tackle, to be worked without catching in the weeds, then, if we must fish, there is nothing for it but to troll with the dead gorge, for the gorge-hooks lie close alongside the bait, and do not catch in the weeds.

Supposing that the stream is only moderately weedy, then, where the weeds are some distance below the surface, we can either spin or float a live-bait over them; and either of these methods may be used alongside reed-beds. For the average river in summer there is, on the whole, no tackle so useful as the paternoster, for it can be dropped into any hole or corner among weed and reed beds, where no other tackle, except a trolling-bait, can be used. But where a long stretch of sunken weed has to be fished, and the water is so bright that the angler must keep far away from his bait, then I think that float or spinning tackle is better, as, if the paternoster is cast out any distance among weeds, it becomes entangled with them. When the bottom is clear, the paternoster can be cast 40yds. or more away; but when it is weedy, the angler has to see where he drops it in.

With regard to spinning, which is certainly the most artistic method of taking pike, I should be guided in a great measure by the extent of water I had to fish, for, if my water was limited in extent, it would be folly to adopt a method by which every part of it could be covered in an hour. In a small sheet of water it would be much better to live-bait than to spin. Then, again, on calm days spinning is very little use, as the fish see too clearly through the deception. On such days nothing beats the paternoster.

In winter, when the water is free from weeds, the angler can follow almost any method he fancies; but for very deep water he will find it better to use the paternoster, leger, or trolling-bait, rather than float or spinning tackle.

Suppose, now, we are fishing a small river, such as the Loddon, in summer, and come to a pool surrounded by reeds. What should be done? It is too small to spin, for two casts of the spinning bait would scare every jack in it, and the bait would be drawn home and out almost before a pike had time to seize it. To use float-tackle would not be much better, for a gentle stream runs through the pool, which would carry our bait into the reeds within a couple of minutes of its going into the water (if we were in a boat at the top end of the pool we might, of course, check the float; but being on the bank, we cannot do

this). Clearly, the thing to do is to drop a paternoster in various corners of the pool, or to work a snap trolling-bait carefully over it.

Change the scene to an immense Irish lake, some fifteen or twenty miles in length. We know nothing of the best parts for jack-fishing, but we notice that here and there are clumps of weeds coming to the surface. We can also see a few reed-beds; but the water round them is too shallow to contain pike. Clearly, the weeds are the things to fish, and as in such a large expanse of *water* we have to cover as much *ground* as possible (an expression pardonable in Ireland), we neither fish with float-tackle nor paternoster, but let out spinning baits behind our boat, and row along the shore, and whenever we find an island of weeds, row round it two or three times as close as we possibly can manage it, patiently removing the weeds which catch our baits every few minutes. By this means we in time learn the best spots in the lake, and a day or two later, having been able to get some live bait, paternoster round the most likely weed-beds with much success.

Scene 3 is a mill-pond, about an acre in extent. The pike are mostly found on one side, which is skirted by a small bed of rushes. If we have ample time, we cast a live bait on float-tackle near these rushes, and wait patiently, leaving the bait to work about; or we carefully paternoster every inch of likely pike-water. If we have only an hour to devote to fishing, we spin the water, and so cover every yard of it in a very short time.

Scene 4—a pond surrounded by trees, the bottom of which is covered with old branches and snags. Clearly, we cannot paternoster, and as it is a small place, it is not advisable to spin it over. No; the best thing to do is to live-bait it, so arranging the float that the bait is suspended well above the snags.

Scene 5—a disused canal, stagnant, and closely covered with weeds. Here, if we fish at all, gorge trolling tackle must be used, for no other tackle could be got through the weeds.

I could give many more instances to illustrate the necessity of the pike-fisher adapting his tackle to circumstances, and not

being too wedded to one method to the exclusion of the others. Judgment and common sense will assist materially in filling the angler's basket. Patience, also, is a very necessary virtue in pike-fishing, and it must be a bad day indeed, and a very ill-stocked water, which will not afford a brace of fish to the man who fishes carefully and patiently from morn to eve. At the same time, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, the most tempting baits, and the finest tackle London can produce, will avail nothing when the fish are "not in the humour."



CHAPTER II.

TACKLE.

Rod and Fittings—Reel—Reel-guard—Line—Line-winder—Gimp—Gimp-stain—Disgorger—Jardine Gag—Knots, &c.



IN this chapter are described those items of tackle common to all kinds of pike-fishing—that is to say, the rod and its fittings, the reel, the line, and sundry less important articles—and an account is given of the methods by which gut is knotted together, hooks bound on to gimp, and other matters of a like nature, concerning which it behoves every pike-fisherman to have some knowledge. I reserve the description of the tackle necessary for and peculiar to the various branches of pike fishing for future chapters.

The Pike-rod and its Fittings.—Our grandfathers' pike-rods were long, heavy, cumbrous affairs. Coarse tackle was then the fashion, and rod, line, and gimp matched one another. Now that anglers use stout gut and the finest gimp, the pike-rod is necessarily less heavy than was formerly the case. A rule always to be observed in angling is, regulate the weight and stiffness of the rod to the line. This is especially important in fly-fishing, and should not be ignored in pike-fishing. If we use a stiff, heavy rod and light gut tackle, we are almost certain—to use fishermen's English—to get smashed.

The pike-rod may be made either of wood (and of woods greenheart is by far the best suited for the purpose) or of East India cane. I believe a few pike-rods have been

recently made of split cane—built-cane rods they are termed. They are certainly heavier than the rod made of single pieces of bamboo, as East India cane is often called; they cannot stand the wear and tear incident to pike-fishing; and they are very expensive. For spinning they should be very pleasant to use, and that is all I can say for them. The greenheart rod is an admirable weapon, and lasts a lifetime, but I prefer the rod of East India cane, as it is much lighter, and will, with a little care, last almost as long. It should be between 10ft. and 13ft. in length, according to the height and strength of the angler, and is made, for convenience, in three or four joints. It should have three strong tops of well-seasoned greenheart, the longest the same length as the other joints, the shortest a little less than half that length, and the third very short and stiff. One of these should be contained in the butt, which is frequently hollowed for the purpose. At the end of each top should be one of the rings shown in Fig. 3, which are now, I believe, generally acknowledged to be better suited for their purpose than any other top-ring yet designed. Of course, it is shamefully immodest for me to speak thus of my own invention, but the ring has been so highly praised, and is now used by so many experienced anglers, that I hope I have sufficient grounds for the statement. The advantages of the ring are, shortly, these: It decreases friction by adapting itself to whatever angle the line makes with the rod, and, for the same reason, lessens the likelihood of the top-joint getting warped sideways—a common complaint of pike-rods. The line, also, rarely gets badly fouled, for, should it get round the top, the ring at once goes flat, as shown in the engraving, and allows the line (on a jerk being given to the rod) to slip off. For pike-fishing, those made with an interior revolving ring of phosphor-bronze not less than $\frac{3}{16}$ in. in diameter should be selected. The makers are Messrs. Warner & Sons, of Redditch.



FIG. 3. "BICKERDYKE"
ROD-TOP
RING, WITH
INTERIOR
REVOLVING
RING OF
PHOSPHOR-
BRONZE.

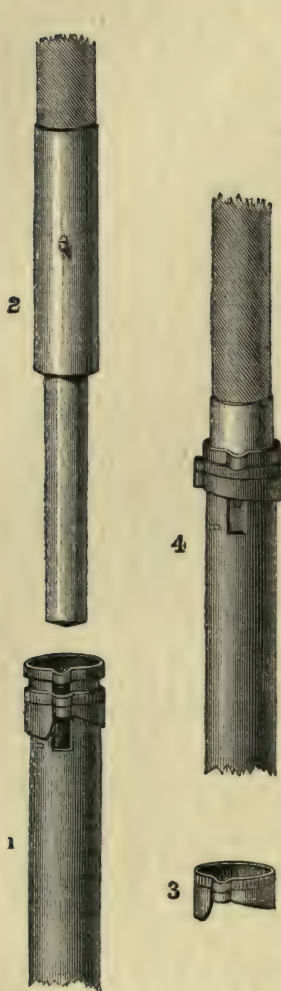


FIG. 4. ROD-JOINT FASTENING.

The joints of the rod may be either spliced together or joined by means of ferrules. The latter is by far the most convenient arrangement, but as ordinarily made they are apt to come apart. The top-joint in particular is very apt to "throw out," as it is termed. A fastening of some kind is obviously necessary.

Several arrangements have come into use of late years to fasten the joints of fly-rods, any of which can be applied to a pike-rod. Perhaps the best are those made by Hardy Brothers, of Alnwick (illustrated in "Angling for Coarse Fish"), and by Farlow and Co. Fig. 4 sufficiently explains the latter, which, being possibly a little stronger than Hardy's, is preferable for pike-rods; but both fastenings are excellent. In Farlow's fastening the little ring (3) pulls everything up firm and tight, however much the ferrules may be worn. Ferrules are sometimes so accurately fitted—in fact, ground into one another like gas-taps—that even in fly-fishing they do not come apart. So made they are termed suction-joints, and are, to my mind, superior to the ordinary ferrules with patent fastenings. These suction-ferrules have not, so far as I know, been used on pike-rods, but they seem to me suitable for all kinds of rods.

A great deal has been written concerning the importance of

having ferrules made, not by cutting lengths off brass tubing, but by moulding each one out of a piece of sheet brass, brazing the edges together, and hammering into the proper shape when cold. I have rods fitted with both kinds of ferrules, and have found that both will occasionally crack* at the joint. Far more important is it, in my opinion, to have round both the upper and lower edges of the female ferrule (No. 1 in Fig. 4) a small rim of metal. The two points at which ferrules crack are thus doubled in strength, and the extra weight of the three ferrules so strengthened is under $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. The lower end of each joint (except the butt, which should terminate with a good-sized knob of indiarubber) should be double-brazed—that is, the portion which enters the ferrule of the joint below entirely covered with brass (see No. 2 in Fig. 4).

A word now as to winch-fittings and rings. A 12ft. pike-rod should have at least eleven rings on it, in addition to the top-ring already mentioned. They should be upright, and all of the same diameter as the top-ring—*i.e.*, not less than $\frac{3}{8}$ in. The best-shaped rings are similar to the one shown in the engraving (Fig. 5), and



FIG. 5. SNAKE-SHAPED ROD RING.

even if a rod is purchased with the ordinary round rings, the ring nearest the butt should be replaced by a snake-shaped ring. The line runs easier through these rings than through any others, and *never* fouls them—a point of no small importance. They should be made of hardened phosphor-bronze wire—a substance nearly as hard as steel, which has the advantage of not rusting. I think it might with advantage be used for many items of fishing-tackle. Hardened German silver is also coming into use for rod-fittings. All rings sooner or later get cut into by the constant friction of the line, and some anglers prefer the ordinary round rings with an interior revolving ring of steel or bronze, similar to the one shown

* If a ferrule cracks, bind it round tightly with well-waxed silk twist for $\frac{1}{4}$ in. from the top, finish off as shown in Fig. 19, and well varnish. The ferrule will then probably last for years.

in the illustration] of the Bickerdyke top-ring. As soon as the inside ring gets a little worn it is shifted round so that a fresh portion of its surface is exposed to the friction of the line. This is a good plan, but I prefer the snake-shaped rings because of their anti-fouling qualities, lightness, and cheapness. When they get worn it is a very trifling expense to have them replaced by others. With regard to the position of the rings, it may be useful to give the measurements from ring to ring on a first-rate three-joint 12ft. spinning-rod of mine, made by Bainbridge, of Eton. The distance from the top-ring to the next ring is $4\frac{1}{2}$ in., and the remainder follow one another with these intervals: 6in., 7in., $8\frac{1}{2}$ in., $9\frac{1}{2}$ in., 11in., 11in., 12in., 13in., 16in., 17in. The distances between the rings do not increase in exact proportion, owing to the ferrules displacing one or two of them a little.



FIG. 6. NEW WINCH-FITTING.

In the matter of winch-fittings, the angler will do well to avoid the old-fashioned pair of rings—one fixed, the other sliding—which, as a rule, either held the winch so fast that there was no getting it off, or so loosely that the back of the winch-plate had to be padded with paper. The best arrangement of the kind is, in my opinion, the Weeger winch-fitting which, being well known, and easily obtained at any tackle-shop, does not require description. It is very simple, very strong, takes any size winch, and has no projecting portion to catch the line or hurt the hand. Those anglers who object to ring winch-fittings in any shape or form will probably prefer a new and good fitting brought out recently by the maker of my rings. They take any sized winch, and are shown in Fig. 6. A is a tapered socket, into which one end of the winch-plate slides, the other end being placed in the socket

B, which is moved into position by loosening the nut C, and sliding B and C along the plate D. The operation is a very simple one, and done in ten seconds. The screw-nut C is so made that it cannot possibly come off and be lost.

It is the worst possible economy to buy a cheap pike-rod. For bottom-fishing a very inexpensive little affair will do; but for pike something that will stand much knocking about is required. It *may* have to land a forty-pounder, remember; and only imagine the feelings of a man who, after losing such a fish by his rod breaking, is made miserable for the rest of his life by the knowledge that, if he had only expended 5s. extra at the tackle-shop, he might have caught that pike.

Every spring we should give our pike-rods a coat of coach-maker's varnish, first rebinding any rings which are loose. When joints stick together, the best plan is to hold them in the flame of a spirit lamp or candle: the outside ferrule expands with the heat, and the joints can generally be pulled apart. As a matter of fact, joints will never stick if they are occasionally greased with vaseline or oil, or soft soap—the first for preference. When top-joints seem inclined to warp, they should be warmed before the fire, and then hung up, with a heavy weight at the lower end. It is not advisable to warm bamboo joints.

Rods are nearly always kept in partition-bags. In shop-made bags the partitions usually fit the joints too tightly, and when shrunk with the wet—as they often are—cause many a ring to be broken. Home-made bags with roomy partitions are far the best. By the way, many a good rod has been ruined by being put into a damp bag.

The Reel should be strong, simple in construction, large

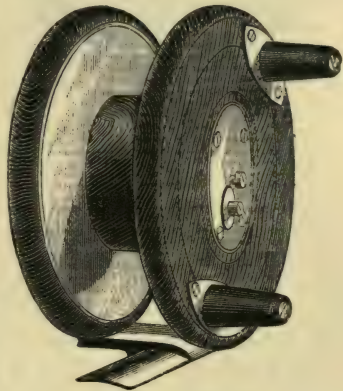


FIG. 7. NOTTINGHAM REEL, WITH ADJUSTABLE CHECK.

enough to hold 100yds. of line, large in the barrel, so that it winds up the line quickly, and so arranged that the line can neither uncoil off it nor foul round it. A well-made Nottingham reel with a check and a line-guard has all these qualities except the last-mentioned one, and that can be obtained by a little device to be mentioned anon. Fig. 7 is engraved from a very beautiful—and, alas! very expensive—patent Nottingham reel called the “Sun.” It is peculiar in having a metal rim on the inside of back-plate, and also a metal

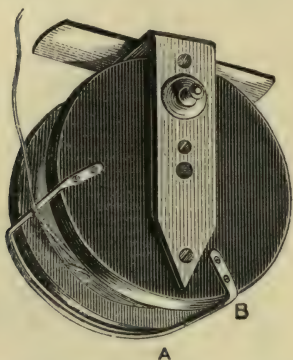


FIG. 8. NOTTINGHAM REEL, WITH THE AUTHOR'S LINE-GUARD AND MOVABLE CHECK.

inner revolving plate, which prevents all possibility of warping or sticking. In Fig. 8 is shown a Nottingham reel fitted with a little invention of my own, intended to prevent the line uncoiling (as dressed lines frequently will) off the reel. This line-guard has answered beyond my expectations. It can be fitted to any wooden reel by a watch-maker or any metal-worker for a few pence.

Slater, of Newark-on-Trent, sells a very excellent patent combination reel, having a movable check and a line-guard. There is nothing to choose between his guard and the one I have described, beyond the question of cost. I have quite recently been trying a reel of novel construction, which seems to have all the good qualities of both the ordinary and the Nottingham reels. It has a large barrel, is made of vulcanite and metal, has bars across to prevent the line unwinding, and has a movable check. The point of novelty in it is a sort of brake, which, on being pressed by the little finger, checks the reel to any extent desired. I believe it is to be called the brake reel. Inexpensive Nottingham reels with movable checks are sold by nearly all tackle-makers. *All reels should be taken to pieces and well vaselined or oiled twice a year.*

When the line is hanging loosely, it sometimes gets round what I may term the neck of the reel. To prevent this, Mr. Pennell advised a short piece of steel spring to be attached to the rod, with one end resting on a bar of the reel. Another plan, suggested by "Hi Regan" in his useful work, "How and Where to Fish in Ireland," was to pass a piece of eelskin over a bar at the back of the reel, and lash the ends on to the butt of the rod. Both these plans answer admirably, and I only now suggest something different on account of its extreme simplicity. Take a piece of twine, or 2ft. of the line; fasten one end to A (see Fig. 8), pass the other end twice or thrice round the rod, pull it tight, and fasten it at B. You have then a mechanical equivalent of either the eelskin or the spring.

The Line is the most important part of the running tackle. It should be of pure silk, plaited and solid (inferior lines are made hollow, or plaited on a core). It should be the same thickness throughout, and not tapered as are the lines used in fly-fishing. For ordinary casting in the Thames style the line should always be dressed or waterproofed with an oil dressing; but for casting off the reel after the manner of the Trent anglers (an excellent method when fishing from the bank where the ground is rough and likely to catch the line, or in a high wind) no dressing is necessary or even desirable. With regard to the dressing, I can only repeat what I have already written under the head of "Angling for Coarse Fish": The best dressing is simply raw linseed oil, but it takes such a long time to dry that it is rarely used; next best is boiled linseed oil. The line is soaked for a week in the oil (cold), then stretched between two trees, well rubbed with a piece of smooth leather (this gets the air-bubbles out of the line), and then put to soak for two more days. It is then stretched between trees, the superfluous oil wiped gently off, and left to dry—an operation which will take about six months. A line so prepared will last for years. If it is desirable to put on a fine polish, this can be easily done, when the line is dry, by well rubbing it with a piece of leather on which is a little raw linseed oil.

Lines are not necessarily strong because they are thick. A thick line, half cotton, is not stronger than a line one-third the thickness, of pure silk. It is difficult for me to say what sized line is best for general fishing; but a good silk line which breaks at a strain of 12lb. or 13lb. will be fine enough for Thames jack-fishing—finer, indeed, than most beginners would care to use. A rather stouter line is advisable for spinning, as in that mode of angling the line is subjected to much friction, and soon wears out; and also for fishing the Irish and Scotch lakes, where giant pike may be expected. If the angler makes up his mind to devote his attention exclusively to the giants, and fishes with baits of 1lb. or more, he will do well to use rather stouter gimp and line than ordinary, for very large pike sometimes put out extraordinary strength.

I always have my pike-lines in two pieces, the front piece, which I may term the working portion, about 60yds. in length, of the dressed line described; while behind it is a back line of undressed, twisted silk, which is finer, but equally strong because it is twisted. This fineness is an advantage, for it enables extra line to be got on the reel; and as the back-line is not dressed, it does not heat and rot, as dressed lines do occasionally if a great number of yards are wound on a reel. These two lines should, of course, not be knotted together, but spliced in the following manner: The end of the dressed line should first be scraped a little with a penknife, to thin it down, and the end of the twisted line unravelled for lin. The two ends should then be thoroughly well waxed with cobbler's wax, laid together, and rolled between the first finger and thumb. The next process is to bind them over carefully with well-waxed silk; finish off as shown in Fig. 19, and the splice is complete.

Lines should always be dried after use. My favourite plan is simply to pull the line off the reel on to the floor or table, leave it untouched all night, and wind up again in the morning. There are several "ifs" about the success of this plan: If your line does not kink, which it will not do if the tackle described in this book is used; if the maidservant can be persuaded not to move it in the morning, and if there are no children, dogs, or cats to interfere with it; if there are no

mice to nibble it—for mice like boiled oil—and provided there is no earthquake, it will wind up without the least tendency to tangle. Notwithstanding all these “ifs,” I find my plan answer very well indeed. Chair-backs are often used as line-winders; a better plan is to knock two nails in the wall some yards apart, and hang the line between them. The nails should be

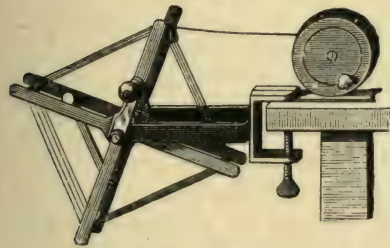


FIG. 9. LINE-DRIER.

bound round with string, or the wet line will rust them. Far preferable to these makeshifts is a revolving frame, on which the line can be wound. The best thing of the kind sold in the tackle-shops is the line-drier shown in Fig. 9, which has been patented by

Farlow & Co. It is collapsible. An inexpensive and easily made line-drier is a light, revolving, wooden frame.

Gimp.—The mouth of the pike being furnished with very sharp teeth, so much of the tackle as may be exposed to these natural knives has to be of some unbiteable substance. Gimp (silk—sometimes, alas! mixed with cotton—served with fine wire) is used for the purpose. Always buy the best gimp. Go to a good shop, give a good price, and do not be surprised if you even then get a bad article. You will have the consolation of knowing it was not your fault.

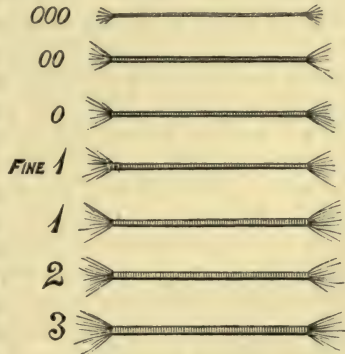


FIG. 10. GAUGES OF GIMP.

I have long had an idea that the silk in the centre of the gimp might, with advantage, be mixed with very fine strands of wire; and last year Mr. Kenning, of Little Britain, a gold-

lace and gimp manufacturer, very kindly carried out some experiments for me. In the end he managed to produce 000 gimp (see gauges of gimp, Fig. 10) exactly double the strength of ordinary gimp the same size. This great step in advance was effected by means of a single strand of wire, made of a patent metal possessing great tensile strength. This wire-centred gimp, which can be relied on not to grow rotten in a few months, was patented by Warner & Sons, of Redditch. The only fault it has is that it is a little stiff, and can only be used with advantage for traces, and in other positions where great pliancy is not required. In future pages I will indicate where it should be used. It is largely used by salt-water anglers, on account of its durability.

Gimp-stain. — Gimp when new is the colour of either brass, copper, or silver. Copper shows the least in the water. Silver gimp is useful for any portion of tackle which lies close to the bait, and actually adds to the bait's attractiveness. For the rest of the tackle the gimp should be stained; and this staining question has been a serious matter anywhere out of London. Possibly, in the course of the next hundred years, a gimp-manufacturer will see his way to stain the wire before it is wound round the silk; but I do not expect to see it. In our smoke and sulphur-ridden metropolis, the angler has only to hang up his coil of gimp on a nail in a gas-lit room for a few days, and it will quickly lose its lustre. The great difficulty in staining gimp with chemicals is to avoid rotting the silk. Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell's recipe for brass gimp (bichlorate of platinum one part, water ten parts) has been used by some with disastrous results, but I am inclined to think the fault lay with the workmen, and not the tool. Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell suggests leaving the gimp in the stain a quarter of an hour. This I maintain to be a mistake. The solution should be so strong as to act almost instantaneously on the wire, thus allowing the gimp to be removed before the liquid can reach the silk. There is no occasion to turn the brass black—it only requires dulling. My plan has been to leave the gimp in the stain for five seconds, no more nor less, then take it out, and throw it into a basin of clean water, rinse it

well, and wipe it dry. It is well to remember that each time the stain is used the solution becomes weakened, as the brass takes away with it a coating of platinum. Another plan, recommended by Mr. Jardine, is to leave the gimp in a receptacle containing imitation London air. The process takes four or five hours, and does not rot the silk. It gives the gimp a nice colour. The imitation London atmosphere is manufactured in the following manner: Put 1oz. flowers of sulphur in a flower-pot saucer, and place over it, on end, a drain-pipe or other cylinder. Arrange a coil of gimp at the top of the cylinder, cover over with, first, a sheet of paper, and then a soup-plate, and set fire to the sulphur with a fusee. The atmosphere produced will stain the gimp in a few hours. I have often thought that if the bichlorate of platinum could be made into a stiff paste, it could be applied without the slightest danger of its reaching the silk; and while bothering all my chemical friends for a recipe, a mixture of vaseline, nitrate of silver, and sulphur was suggested. I accordingly experimented, and at the end of two hours produced a paste which, ten minutes after being smeared on the gimp, gave the wire that dull, neutral tint which is so desirable, without affecting the silk in the least. This paste acts equally well on silver gimp. Its proportions are as follows: Nitrate of silver, 35 grains; sulphur, 1 drachm; vaseline, $\frac{1}{2}$ drachm. This makes about a pill-box full, which is sufficient to stain all the gimp an angler is likely to want in two seasons. My paste was made by Mr. Davis, chemist, Northbrook Street, Newbury, who would, no doubt, be very pleased to supply it; but, of course, any chemist can make it, and fishing-tackle makers will be well advised to keep it for sale in small metal boxes.

I intend in future to use nothing but silver gimp, leaving those portions of the tackle which lie along the bait unstained.*

Disgorger and Gag.—To remove the hooks from the pike

* In the course of my experiments I found that brass gimp could be made to look like copper gimp by hanging it for half an hour in the fumes arising from a mixture of black oxide of manganese, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., and spirits of salt, 1oz.—an experiment easily carried out by means of a large-mouthed glass bottle. An equally good, if not better, mixture for the same purpose, the fumes from which will stain the gimp in ten minutes, is bleaching powder (chloride of lime), $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., and dilute sulphuric acid, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. The bottle in which the operation is carried on should not be tightly stoppered, a small crack being left to act as a safety-valve.

we require, first of all, some instrument to keep its mouth open.

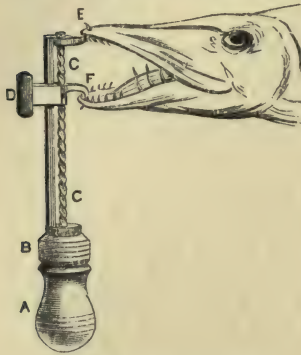


FIG. 11. THE JARDINE GAG (PATENT).

For this purpose there is nothing better than the gag shown in Fig. 11. It was invented and patented by Mr. Alfred Jardine. The knob D, at the end, is used to knock the fish on the head before the gag is inserted. E, F, which are close together, are inserted in the pike's mouth. B is then held in the left hand, and the handle A is turned round, when F works down the spiral rod, C, C, and, of course, the pike's mouth can be opened to the widest extent. This

luxurious machine is made in smaller sizes for large trout and for salmon, and is no doubt kept in stock at the principal tackle-shops. I advise every pike-fisherman to obtain one of these most useful instruments. I have often been bitten by pike for want of a gag. An instrument known as pike-scissors is sold for the same purpose, but it is not so useful as Mr. Jardine's gag.

The mouth open, we next want a disgorging. The best thing of the kind for pike is the one with a corkscrew handle shown in Fig. 12. If the handle is of very hard wood, or is weighted with lead, it can be used to knock the pike on the head, an operation which should always be performed before any attempt is made to remove the hooks.

Bait-can.—For holding live baits a can is necessary, and the very best

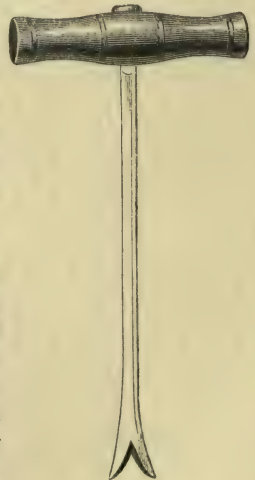


FIG. 12. DISGORGER.

thing of the kind (invented by Mr. Basil Field) is shown in the engraving (Fig. 13). The perforated zinc interior (D) is lifted whenever a bait is required, and there is obviously no occasion to wet the hands or warm the water by groping in it for the baits. In the handle (A) is a small pair of bellows, worked by merely pressing the knob B. The air passes down the small tube (C), and bubbles up at the bottom of the can. When at the riverside, the perforated interior can be sunk in the water. Taking into consideration the great advantages of these bait-cans, and their excellence, they are wonderfully cheap;

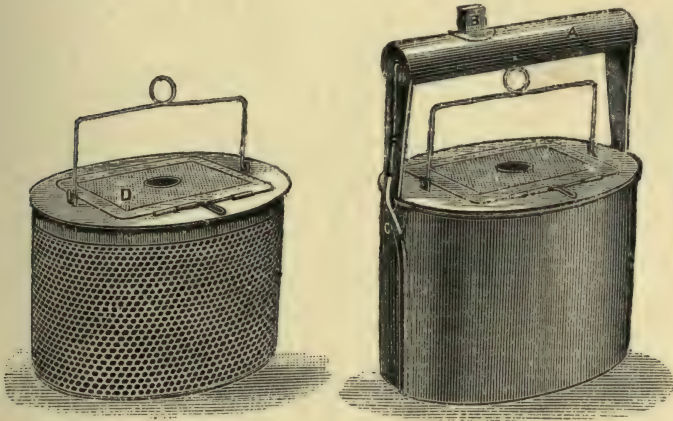


FIG. 13. PATENT AËRATING BAIT-CAN.

they are made by the maker of Mr. Field's gaff (page 37). Even should a more simple can be preferred, I would still strongly urge the jack-fisher to have one with a perforated interior. A can strong enough to sit on is often very convenient. When baits are carried a long distance by rail or road, it is a good plan to only half fill the can with water. The water then splashes about among the holes in the zinc, and is thus kept well aërated. To keep the water cool in summer, cover the sides of the can with flannel, over which

spill a little water occasionally, by tipping the can to one side. The evaporation of the water from the flannel will lower the temperature of the water in the can considerably.

Landing-net and Gaff.—As small pike can be easily landed with the hand, and as large pike cannot be wheedled by any means whatever into nets of ordinary dimensions, it follows, as a logical conclusion, that the landing-net is not much use to the pike-fisherman. If one is carried, it should be large and strong, the meshes big, and the net dressed with a waterproof mixture—*e.g.*, boiled oil and varnish (equal parts), or tar and turpentine. The gaff, on the other hand, will land any pike over 2lb. in weight. One of the most simple and strong forms of gaff is a simple hook, lashed on to a handle, such as the one illustrated in “Angling in Salt Water.” Those



FIG. 14. METHOD OF FASTENING GAFF TO HANDLE.

that screw in are apt to turn round at the wrong moment. The next strongest, and, perhaps, on the whole, most satisfactory, gaff is one which fits into a square socket (see Fig. 14), and is kept there by means of a spring. The manufacturers of this gaff are Messrs. Allcock & Sons, of Red-ditch. The one defect in this invention is the spring, which, being of steel, if not kept well oiled, rusts very quickly. An excellent and almost everlasting spring

might be made of phosphor-bronze or hardened brass, the former for preference. Indeed, the whole gaff might be made of the bronze with advantage, as that metal can be made very hard.

There are several methods of carrying a gaff. The handle may be stuck through a belt round the angler's waist, as if it were an axe, or it may be passed through a large ring, attached to a sling passing over the angler's right shoulder, like a creel-strap. Another plan is to have a sling on the handle similar to those used on rifles. The gaff then lies across the back

diagonally, and is released by unhooking the end of the sling under the angler's left arm. In Fig. 15 is shown a capital gaff



The Gaff Closed.



The Gaff partially Extended.

FIG. 15. GAFF WITH POINT-PROTECTOR, TELESCOPIC HANDLE, AND SLING.

fitted with this arrangement. It has a point-protector, working on a hinge, which is quite out of the way when the handle is extended. It is the invention of Mr. Basil Field, and is made by Henry Bawcombe, of 2A, Victoria Street, Holloway Road, London. If an ordinary gaff is used, the angler should be careful to keep the point covered with a piece of cork, or he may receive a nasty wound.

Knots and Fastenings.—The only knots used by the pike-fisherman which I need mention are: First, one of those used for joining the lower portion of the tackle to the running line, which is, I trust, clearly explained by Fig. 16; second, a knot by which lengths of gut can be joined together. The best knot for the purpose is, I think, the one designed by Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell. It is called the "buffer knot," and is an improvement on a much more ancient affair. Fig. 17 shows the knot in all its stages. The binding is, of course, done with very fine, well-waxed silk, or, which is perhaps better, very fine gut. The gut should



FIG. 16. KNOT FOR FASTENING GIMP OR GUT TO RUNNING LINE.

be soaked for an hour in *cold* water before being tied. This knot is neat and very strong. At the waterside the angler

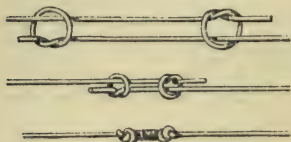


FIG. 17. KNOT FOR TYING LENGTHS OF GUT TOGETHER.

may sometimes find himself obliged to omit the binding. This can only be done with any degree of safety when the lengths of gut to be joined are about the same thickness; the silk, or fine gut, is best fastened off by the method shown in Fig. 19.

Gut should be stained a drabby brown in winter, and a pale green in summer—in each case matching the vegetation as far

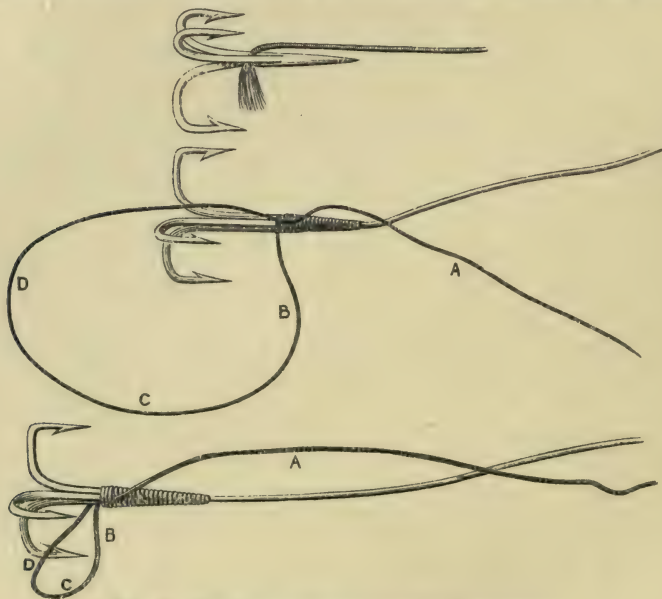


FIG. 18. METHOD OF BINDING GIMP TO TRIANGLES.

as possible in colour. A neutral tint which is generally useful is obtained by leaving the gut for a few minutes in Stephens' blue-black ink. Strong coffee lees, with, possibly, a dash of

black ink, forms a good winter stain, and there is also a brown ink which is useful for the same purpose. For the green stain there are Judson's dyes, or green tea, or the water in which a piece of green baize has been boiled.

Every pike-fisherman should be able to bind on a triangle to a piece of gimp. The process is simple, and, when once acquired, not easily forgotten. First remove the wire from the end of the gimp for $\frac{1}{4}$ in., and pull the floss silk, which is thus bared, between the shanks of two hooks of the triangle, as shown in Fig. 18. Then commence the binding at the end of the shank, until the top of the brazing is reached. Lay the end of the tying-silk (A), or thread, along the shank, and, keeping it there, take three more turns with the binding B, C, at each turn passing the three hooks of the triangle through the loop B, C, D; then pull the end A tight, and the binding is complete. It should afterwards be touched with shellac varnish (shellac, six parts; spirits of wine, eight parts; gum benzoin, two parts), and put in a dry place. This varnish is very useful for all kinds of bindings; it dries very quickly, but should never be allowed to touch water until at least twenty-four hours after it is applied. Articles recently varnished should never be put in a damp place.

I have recently bound on a few triangles with very fine and soft copper wire, first waxing it like silk. *It makes a capital binding*, so far as I can see, is as neat as silk, and quite impervious to the teeth of pike. I have known the silk binding to be bitten all to pieces in an afternoon's fishing, and a tackle to be thus rendered quite useless. A triangle bound on thus to gimp looks much neater than one with an eye at the end of the shank, to which the gimp is looped.

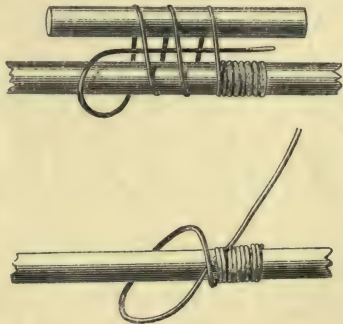


FIG. 19. FINISH OFF OF WHIPPING
IN MIDDLE OF ROD.

Every reader of this book who aspires to be an angler should know how to bind on a hook, or make up any kind of jack-tackle. To finish off bindings in the middle of the tackle, where the plan above described cannot be followed, the same result can be effected by laying a penholder, pencil, or even one's finger along the binding, taking three turns of the binding silk round it and the thing to be bound, passing the end under the coils (see Fig. 19), removing the pen, or finger, as the case may be, and pulling the coils tight. The last thing to do is to pull the end tight. A knowledge of these two methods of fastening off bindings will frequently be found extremely useful.

Sundries.—Among the sundries, I need only now mention wax and silk. The wax used by cobblers is far the best for fishermen. A small portion should be held in a piece of leather when being used. In hot weather cobblers' wax keeps best in water. The best silk for bindings, &c., is not ordinary sewing-silk, but a superior quality, which is sold for use with sewing-machines, and has, on that account, to be strong. I frequently tie on triangles with ordinary thread, but am inclined to think the binding of the future will be fine, soft, copper wire.

A creel, unless of immense size, is not much use to the pike-fisherman. A bag is better, for it takes up no room when empty. The ordinary twill pike-bag sold at fishing-tackle shops is greatly improved by having the side next the body of the angler faced with a piece of waterproof cloth. A small waterproof pocket inside or outside the bag will be found very useful to contain tackle, winch, &c. I will not indicate any special make of bag as being the best, but leave the reader to provide himself according to his fancy, only let the bag be capable of holding at least 70lb. of fish, and let the webbing which crosses the shoulder be broad.

Dress.—Stout waterproof boots (knee high* if the angler does much bank-fishing in winter) and all-wool garments, is sound and sufficient advice to the pike-fisherman on the

* Light indiarubber wading-boots, lined with felt, are sold, which are very comfortable and warm for winter-fishing.

subject of clothing. But abjure buttons; they are the very — I mean, they possess the most objectionable attribute of catching the line whenever an opportunity offers. On gaiters they are particularly annoying. The best leg-covering of the kind for pike-fishing, or, indeed, any other purpose, is fastened by a series of loops, terminating at the top in a small buckle. By reason of its ornamental and useless row of buttons, a double-breasted coat is also objectionable; and the buttons sometimes put at the bottom of one's sleeve for decorative purposes should be ruthlessly cut away. I have twice lost good fish by these same buttons, so write with feeling.

In the following chapters I will describe the various tackles used for live-baiting, spinning, trolling, &c.



CHAPTER III.

LIVE-BAITING.

Float-fishing — Improved Snap-tackles — Gorge-hooks — Paternostering—Legering, &c.



ANGLING for pike with live fish is carried on either with float-tackle, with the paternoster, or with the leger. Float-tackle keeps the bait suspended in mid-water, or lower, and the whole of the tackle is above the bait. The paternoster keeps the bait at the proper depth by means of a lead at the extreme end of the line, about 2ft. below the bait. The leger is somewhat similar to the paternoster, but the lead which rests on the bottom is above the bait, which is at the end of the line. Occasionally it is convenient to use a float with the paternoster and leger, but with the latter rarely. As pike have their eyes situated on the top of the head, they may be naturally supposed to see better that which is above them than things below their level. It follows that, of the three tackles mentioned, the first is the most conspicuous, while in the other two nothing but the bait, with the hook or hooks upon it, and a certain length of line, can be seen, for the lead, in both tackles rests on the bottom, and the float is altogether wanting. Of the two, the paternoster is most deadly, for it enables the bait to be worked in water of practically any depth. In the leger, on the other hand, the bait, being below the lead, is necessarily near the bottom, and that form of tackle is most useful when

the water is coloured, and the pike are feeding, as they generally do under these circumstances, near the bottom. A glance at the illustrations of the tackles given in this chapter will make my meaning clear if it is not so already.

Fishing with Float-tackle is most useful when we wish our bait to be carried along by the stream over a bed of weeds which do not reach to the surface; for working a bait under branches where it could not be cast; for fishing lakes and ponds the bottoms of which are too weedy for the paternoster (if the paternoster is cast out a considerable distance, the line makes such an acute angle with the bottom that the bait is nearly sure to lie in the weeds, if there are any); and, in rivers, for fishing distant spots, to which the bait could not be cast, but to which it can be swept by the current. As a matter of fact, float-tackle can be used almost anywhere, except in very heavy streams, in which pike are not often found, or where the weeds grow to the surface; but it is best suited for the purposes

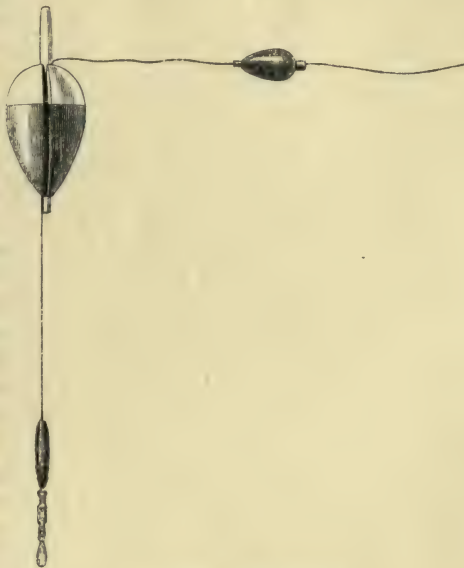


FIG. 20. FLOAT-TACKLE.

I have named. The rod for the purpose should be fitted with a rather stiff top. In fact, the larger and heavier the bait, lead, and float, the stiffer should be the rod.

Fig. 20 is an illustration of the tackle which is best for

float-fishing. Between the main line and the hooks should be 6ft. of either 000 patent gimp (see page 32), or salmon-gut, knotted and stained according to the directions in Chapter II. At the end of the gut, or gimp, as the case may be, is a tapered lead, with a hole down its centre, which should be painted a dull brown colour in winter and a quiet green in summer and autumn, and be kept in its place on the gimp by means of a tiny plug of wood. Below the lead is a hook-swivel. Of hook-swivels there are many patterns, but I need only mention the one shown in Fig. 21, which is excellent in every



FIG. 21. HOOK-SWIVEL.

respect. It is easily fastened to the other portion of the tackle, and is absolutely safe. I do not know the inventor, but as it is a novelty, it may be well to mention that it is made by Warner & Sons, of Redditch. Another very good hook-swivel is shown attached to a spinning lead in Fig. 38.

The "*Fishing Gazette*" float (shown in Fig. 20) is the best pike-float made. It should not, unless the baits used are very large, be of greater size than a hen's egg. It is kept in its place on the gimp by means of a peg. The old-fashioned floats also had a hole down their centres, but were without the slit in the side which enables the modern float to be taken on or off the line in a moment. In addition to the large float,* one or two small ones are advisable above it, at distances of 12in. or 18in. They keep the line from sinking (sometimes it sinks so low that the bait swims round it) and getting entangled with the float, and also help the angler to judge, when his float goes under, whether the disappearance is merely an effort of the bait to escape, or a run from a pike.† It is perhaps as well for the beginner

* Some pike-fishermen use no large float, but five or six small ones, a plan which allows the bait great freedom, and is, so far, superior to the tackle illustrated; but to move so many floats when the depth has to be changed is inconvenient, and occasions a loss of time. Probably, as many jack would be caught by one method as by the other.

† I advise all anglers, when using float-tackle, to rub a little grease over the line, to cause it to float. Almost any grease will do; red deer's kidney suet, sold by Eaton and Deller, is perhaps the best. Palm oil answers well; so does beef suet.

to have a float just so large that the bait cannot pull it under; but the more experienced angler will use a smaller float, and judge from the movement of the auxiliary floats—if I may so term them—whether a pike has hold of the bait or not.

It should be carefully borne in mind that, if the float is put too deep, and the bait is all but on the bottom, a pike cannot pull the float under unless he dashes off at great speed, which he usually does not do. Under these circumstances, several runs may be had without the inexperienced angler being any the wiser.

In summer I have seen very good results from using a quill float, such as would be suitable for chub-fishing, the other tackle being, of course, proportionately fine, and the bait very small—a year-old dace or chub. In the hot months, when the water is clear, and there is no breeze or rain to ruffle the surface, the ordinary pike float-tackle does not, as a rule, account for many fish. Of course, this remark does not apply to those exceptional streams where pike are many and anglers few; but it does apply with great force to the Thames and other clear and over-fished rivers.

The hooks for float-fishing are of three kinds—snap-hooks, gorge-hooks, and semi-gorge hooks. The former are so arranged that the pike can be struck immediately he takes the bait; while with the last-mentioned he is allowed to gorge the bait, and gets hooked in his throat or stomach. Gorge-hooks, I need hardly say, are never used by humane anglers. As pike frequently refuse to gorge the bait after they have seized it, gorge-tackle is not so certain as might otherwise be imagined. The semi-gorge tackle is simply a triangle in the back fin. The pike, after taking the bait, is allowed about three minutes to turn it, and get the triangle well in his mouth, when he is struck.

It was my ambition, some years ago, to produce a good arrangement of snap-hooks, and after many experiments, I made up a tackle similar to that shown in Fig. 22. At the time I considered it perfection. It was an improvement on an older tackle known as the “saddle-back.” In the tackle as I then made

it, the single hook which goes through the back of the fish was immovable, and instead of the peculiar triangle on the shoulder of the bait, with one hook reversed (see Fig. 23), an ordinary triangle was used, above which was a large roach-hook (bound on the gimp the reverse way to the other hooks), which was

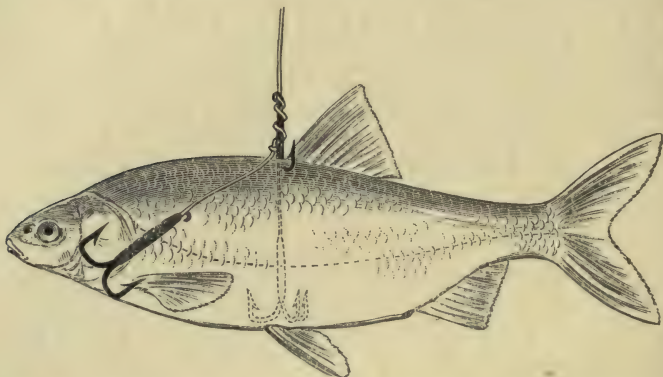


FIG. 22. THE AUTHOR'S SNAP TACKLE. (The dotted line shows the position of the triangle on the other side of bait).

inserted in the shoulder of the bait. I thought this tackle was perfection, because the first day I tried it, out of twelve runs, eleven fish were secured; and a few days later, out of ten runs, all the fish were landed—*i.e.*, in all twenty-one fish resulted from twenty-two runs. The reasons why the tackle was so successful were simply these: The bait had hooks on both sides of it, so that, from whichever side the jack approached, he was almost certain to have one triangle brought in contact with the *lower* jaw and tongue (there is next to nothing for a hook to take hold of in the upper



FIG. 23. IMPROVED TRIANGLE FOR SNAP-TACKLE.

part of a jack's mouth); and the capture was rendered doubly sure by reason of one triangle being near the bait's

head, the other hanging about its middle. The object of the reversed hook was not only to keep the triangle in its place on the shoulder, but also to allow the tackle to come freely from the bait when the pike was struck. If the hook were put the other way, it would, on the strike taking place, be dragged into and through the bait. As pike always seize the bait from underneath, it seems to follow as a matter of course that, for the triangle to be well within the jack's mouth, it should be near the belly, and not near the back, of the bait. But whatever the reasons may be, I have almost invariably found the tackle successful, and always use it for good-sized baits, which require carefully guarding.* I have only recently combined the reverse hook and the triangle in the manner shown in Fig. 23, and I have to thank Messrs. Warner & Sons, who have made several novel items of tackle at my request, for working

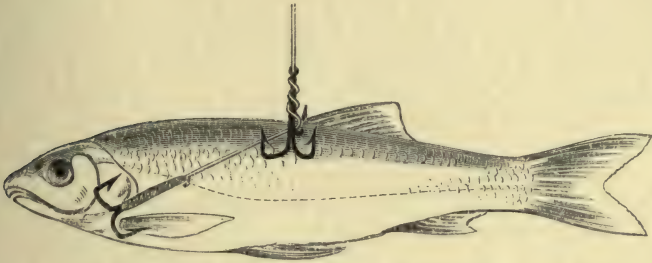


FIG. 24. IMPROVED JARDINE SNAP-TACKLE.

out my idea so satisfactorily. It is astonishing how much trouble is involved in what appears so trifling a matter as getting a hook made to a peculiar bend. However intelligent the manufacturer may be, it is most difficult to get the workman to work on new lines.

A live-bait tackle which is deservedly very popular at the present time is one used by Mr. Alfred Jardine, a well-known

* Mr. Jardine has shown me a saddle-back tackle, made a good many years ago, in which two ordinary triangles were mounted on soft wire. One triangle was hooked on to the shoulder, and the other was hitched into the vent, or hung straight down the side. Mr. Jardine tells me that he has found this a very killing tackle.

pike-fisherman, who very kindly gave me the benefit of his advice in getting the triangle shown in Fig. 23 into shape. His tackle is very similar to that shown in Fig. 24. The only difference is that in the original Jardine snap the dorsal triangle was not adjustable, and in lieu of the reversed hook at shoulder of the bait, a very small hook of fine wire, pointing the same way as the others, was caught into the base of the pectoral fin. The tackle in Fig. 24 is useful for baits of moderate size, and is, I venture to think, an improvement on Mr. Jardine's old pattern. It can be adjusted to almost any-sized bait; the hook at the shoulder lies close to the bait, keeps its position during the cast, and comes away very easily when the pike is struck.

For small baits, a tackle similar to the arrangement of hooks shown in the illustration of the paternoster (Fig. 27) should be used; and if the bait is *very* small, there is nothing better than a single hook, mounted on fine gimp, put through both lips of the bait. With a single hook the angler should wait about a quarter of a minute before striking, whereas, with the other snap-tackles, he can strike immediately he feels sure the pike has seized the bait.

There is still another tackle which I have seen used with great success on the Thames—the semi-gorge referred to above. It is, as I have said, simply a solitary triangle, one hook of which, used to stick in the back fin of the bait, is of smaller size than the others. The pike, on seizing the bait, is given about three minutes, and then struck, when the hooks are generally found in the right place. Of course, with only a triangle on the back of the bait, it is, as a rule, of little use to strike until the pike has turned the bait head downwards, and commenced to swallow it. I may remark, in passing, that the proportion between the pike and the bait has more to do with the hooking of the former than most anglers are aware of. If a large pike seizes a small bait, he probably takes it into his mouth at the first onset, and the hooks, wherever they may be, will almost certainly take hold; but if a small pike seizes a large bait, the odds are on his not getting hooked.

A gorge-hook proper for live bait is shown in Fig. 25. It is fastened to the bait by means of a baiting-needle. Of baiting-needles there are several patterns, one of which is shown in Fig. 26. The loop at end of the gimp is put through the eye of the needle; the point of the needle is then inserted under skin of bait, just above the pectoral fin, and brought out near the dorsal or back fin, and the gimp pulled through until the shank of the hook is covered by the skin of the bait. When a run is had with this tackle, it is necessary to wait from five to eight minutes, meanwhile



FIG. 25. GORGE-HOOK FOR LIVE BAIT.

paying out line, if need be, for the pike must go where he will without the slightest check. Then gather up loose line, and strike, or, rather, drag the fish in, for the poor beast with the hook in his entrails requires little striking or playing.* To remove the hook, knock the pike on the head, unfasten the loop at the end of the gimp from the swivel, make an incision in the belly of the pike where the hook can be *felt*, and draw the hook out backwards.

About the only real difficulty in fishing with float-tackle is to determine the proper distance at which to put the float from the bait; both in rivers and lakes it is necessary to have some idea of the depth of the water to do this. When in a punt, the depth is easily ascertained by means of the punt-pole, and it is not a difficult matter to fasten a heavy plummet to the hook, and so plumb the depth. When fishing a strange water from the bank, the only thing to do, if no one is at hand to give the necessary information, is to put the float very deep, cast out, and see if the lead lies on the bottom or not, and keep putting the float higher and higher until it ceases to cock, when the lead will be on the bottom. The



FIG. 26. BAITING-NEEDLE.

* The remarks on gorge-baiting in Chapter V. should be carefully read in connection with this subject.

distance from the lead to the float will then be, roughly, the depth, and the float can be put in its proper position. When fishing over weeds, the bait should swim about 1ft. above the weeds; but over a clear bottom I usually arrange it so that it swims two-thirds of the way from the surface. If the water is much coloured, the bait should be deeper; but if very clear (unless very deep), rather higher, about mid-water. Professional fishermen are always ready to tell one the depth; the angler, however, should not trust to them too much, but occasionally take soundings on his own account.

If the water to be fished is very deep, it is as well—in some cases necessary—to have a sliding float. This is nothing more than the old-fashioned cork float with a hole down the centre; but the hole should be slightly enlarged, and is all the better if lined with light, metal tubing, to allow the line to run freely through it. The top of the tube should be slightly dilated, and neatly fitted to the cork, so that the line may slip through the float easily, and not cut on the metal. To keep this float at the proper distance from the bait, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. of elastic band is tied to the line (make a noose in the line, put the piece of band in it, and pull the noose tight), so that, when the lead causes the bait to sink in the water, the line runs through the float until stopped by the piece of band. When the pike is being played, the float slips down the line to the lead, or as near it as the water will allow, and the piece of rubber band passes through the rod-rings.

Live-baits.—The usual baits for float-tackle are dace and roach. The first-named fish is by far the better of the two. Small carp make long-lived baits, and are very killing in some waters; and where expense is no object, I would strongly recommend goldfish. For lakes and ponds where a good working bait is required—one which will travel about, and cover much ground—there is nothing so good as a small chub. Pike are very fond of gudgeon, but these little fish are hardly showy enough, except in clear water. *Faut de mieux*, a frog may be tried; in some waters—usually lakes—pike take them freely. So far as my experience goes, frogs will not live under water for any length of time. The usual

tackle for frogs is a large, single hook, either hitched into the skin of the back, or passed through the under lip, and so on to the hind leg, to which it is fastened by a piece of thread. The pike should be given at least three or four minutes to get the bait well into his mouth before striking.

Bait-cans are described at page 35. The angler will be well advised to provide himself with a piece of cord, and keep his can, or its zinc interior, as much as possible in the water while he is fishing. If baits have to be taken a long journey, they should be caught two days previously, and kept without food, for when full of food they soon defile the water to such an extent as to poison themselves. I have already stated on page 35 how the water in a bait-can may be kept cool in summer.

Never fish with a half-dead bait. Success is only to be insured by using bright, lively baits, though there are occasions when pike will take almost anything edible.

When fishing rivers in summer, it is not advisable to let the float remain long in one place. Two minutes is usually sufficient, and five minutes nearly always enough. The only exception I would make to this rule is when a short stretch of the river, or a weir-pool, is known to be particularly well stocked with pike. It is rarely necessary to cast out the float-tackle in rivers, for it can generally be worked to the desired spot by means of the current. The less the bait is cast, the longer it lives. When fishing over a sub-aqueous weed-bed, moor the punt, drop the bait into the water, let out 10yds. of line, and wait two or three minutes; then let out 2yds. of line, and wait; and continue letting out line every few minutes until the float is 50yds. or more distant. Then shift the punt, and repeat the process until every yard of the weed-bed has been covered.

The Strike.—There are great differences of opinion among our best pike-fishermen as to how a pike should be struck. Mr. Pennell says strike, and go on striking until, by the kicking of the pike, it is clear the hooks are into him. Mr. Jardine says do not strike, but give a long, steady pull, and hold the pike hard for a few seconds, to get the hooks well

home. My own opinion is that no rule can be laid down which can be applied to all, or even the majority of, cases. When the tackle is 50yds. or more from the angler, Mr. Pennell's hard strike, possibly repeated, is necessary to overcome the elasticity of so much line, and to lift it off the water. The same strike, when the tackle is 5yds. from the angler, would assuredly break the line. Then, again, if the bait, and consequently the triangles, are large or plentiful, a heavier strike is necessary than when they are small or few. I can only say one thing for certain—that great judgment is necessary, and that it is particularly in the strike that the novice can be distinguished from the practised angler. The roof of a pike's mouth is bony, and affords bad anchorage for a hook; but the tongue and lower jaw are good holding-ground; the strike should, therefore, be rather sideways than up. Always be sure that you do not strike on a slack line. First gather in a little line, until you can all but feel the pike, and then strike at once. A harder strike should be made with a pliant rod than a stiff one, and with a short rod than a long one.

Casting.—In live-baiting, as in most methods of pike-fishing, it is often necessary to cast out the tackle a considerable distance—50yds. or more. Thames anglers uncoil some line on the ground, put the bait within about 2yds. of the rod-top, hold the rod in the right hand, at right angles to the direction in which the bait is to go, hold the line in the left hand, swing the bait first back and then out in the right direction, letting go the line as the tackle flies out. The line is, however, not altogether released, but passes between the first finger and thumb of the left hand, which gradually close upon it, and gently check the course of the bait until it is about over the spot where it is intended to fall. When the bait and rod are heavy, the butt of the rod, as well as the line, is held by the left hand (in addition to the right hand); but as soon as the cast is in progress, the left hand leaves the rod, and sees to the line as before. The line for this kind of casting should be dressed or waterproofed (see page 29).

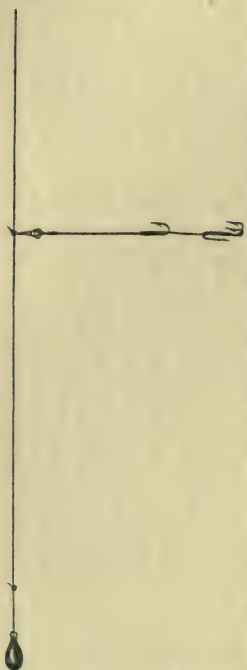
On the Trent the line is run immediately off the reel, and is not

first unwound by the angler. A free-running Nottingham reel (see page 28) is, of course, necessary for this method, and a plaited or twisted, undressed silk line. I do not like it as well as the Thames style, because the bait cannot be cast with quite the same accuracy as when the line is free to pass through the rings without the least check. At the same time, the Nottingham style is very useful when fishing from the bank, especially when the ground is rough, and there are thistles and such-like nuisances to catch the line. On windy days, too, when punt-fishing, the Nottingham style is of service, for the wind frequently blows loose line about, and causes it to catch in something or other.

To cast in the Nottingham style place one hand above the reel, and the other below it. If the cast is made from the right shoulder, the right hand will be above the reel; if from the left shoulder, the left hand. The reel is checked by the pressure of a finger on its rim—either the first finger of the hand below the reel, or the little finger of the hand above it. I prefer the latter method, but the former is, I believe, more common. At the moment of casting, remove the finger from the reel; but when the bait is nearly over the place where you wish it to fall, put a gradual pressure on the rim of the reel with the finger, until you stop it altogether. This method is more difficult than it may seem from reading this description. Beginners will do well to go into the centre of a ten-acre meadow, and practise diligently for two hours before attempting to cast at the waterside.

The Paternoster is a most deadly piece of tackle, which has become a great favourite with most pike-fishermen during the last few years, though it is by no means a novelty, having been used on the Thames, both for pike and perch, for well-nigh a century. Its form will be easily understood from a glance at Fig. 27. The perpendicular portion of it is made either of 000 patent gimp (see page 32), stained, or of salmon-gut (knotted and stained according to the directions on pages 37-8). Below the junction with the hook-length, which should be 6in. to 9in. (according to the weediness of the stream) of ordinary gimp, nicely stained, there is no occasion for any particular strength,

so it will add to the fineness of the tackle to make this portion of fine gut. Another advantage of this plan is that, if the lead catches in anything, the tackle breaks below the hook, and not above it. I am indebted for this idea to Mr. Jardine. The distance from the lead to the hook-link should, as a rule, be about 12in. or 18in.; but it may be even 3ft., if necessary, to keep the bait above the weeds.



Any small bait may be used with this tackle, a dace being probably the best, and a chub or carp the longest lived. The hook-tackle I have shown (the single hook is put through both lips of the bait, and the triangle fixed low on the side, about the middle) is most generally useful; but for *very* small baits, a single hook (No. 10 or No. 12), of the same kind as those shown in the triangle, should be put through both lips of the bait from underneath. For medium-sized baits when the water is coloured, or for large baits at any time, the best tackle is that illustrated on page 47; but when used with a paternoster, it is not arranged on the bait as there shown. The small hook of the dorsal triangle should be put through both lips of the bait, and the end triangle should be fixed on the side, about the middle.

FIG. 27. PIKE PATERNOSTER. When only the single hook is used, the angler should not strike directly he has a run, but should wait for the pike to move off. A hard strike is in this case not necessary, a steady pull being all that is required.

In summer the paternoster is particularly useful for fishing the openings among weeds. The angler can either walk along the bank, and drop it in wherever he sees an opening, or pass

very slowly down the river in a boat, and fish all the most likely spots (see page 10). Except in weir-pools, there is rarely occasion to cast out the paternoster for any considerable distance in summer. Indeed, to cast it out is a mistake; it should rather be swung out with the motion of a pendulum, and at the moment the lead is over the right spot, the line, which is held in the left hand, is released, and the lead and bait dropped gently into the water. The less the disturbance of the water, the more chance there is of catching fish.

In winter (see page 73 as to line freezing), when there are no weeds, the paternoster is very useful for fishing the eddies and other lay-bys where pike are to be found. I need hardly point out that one great advantage of this tackle is that it almost always puts the bait at about the right distance from the bottom, however much the depth may vary. To fish a large eddy it may be necessary to cast out the paternoster some distance. Having cast it out, wait a few minutes, then draw it in a few yards, wait, then draw in again, and so on, until the eddy has been carefully fished all over. How to cast out pike-tackle is described on page 52. The method of gathering the line in the hand described on page 73 will be often found very useful when paternostering.

With small baits it is advisable to use a light lead, about $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., and the longest top to the rod; while for heavier baits a $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. lead is necessary, and a shorter top. When paternostering, I have sometimes found pike bite so gently that I have supposed the movement of the line was caused by the struggles of the bait. To feel a bite it is necessary to keep the line quite taut between the lead and the rod-top. I generally hold the rod in my right hand, and the line in my left hand, and sometimes feel bites from the tugging at the line before any movement of the rod-top is perceptible. When a single hook is used, and the pike are not to be struck at once, it is as well to lower the point of the rod 1 ft. or more *immediately* a bite is felt.

A very novel form of paternoster was illustrated in the *Fishing Gazette* of January 2, 1886. It was the invention of a French nobleman living at Taunton, who had acquired a

great reputation in that district as a successful pike-fisherman, and whose success was said to be due to this particular piece of tackle. The diagram explains its construction. A is the rod; B, a cork on the surface, to indicate bites; C, a common bottle-cork, slit, which supports bait and wire crossbar; D, E, twisted wire crossbar, 8in. in length; E, E, 7in. of gimp; D, F, 2ft. or more of fine twine (fine gut would probably be better), terminated with a bullet. The hook portion of the tackle is very similar to that shown in Fig. 24. The wire

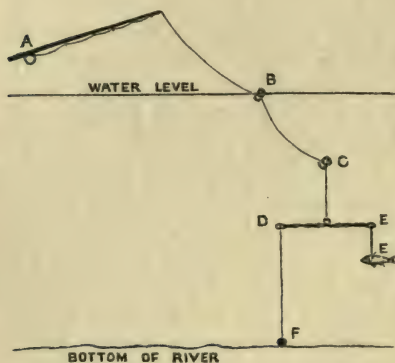


FIG. 28. COUNT DE MOIRA'S BEAM PATERNOSTER.

other portions of the tackle are attached, and an eye in the middle, on which is a hook-swivel. The bottle-cork (C) is a foot or two above the wire, which it supports. The twine or gut D, F can be varied in length according to the depth it is desired to fish. It is obviously important to have the cork C just the right size to support the bait and the wire beam in a horizontal position. With this tackle the bait has great

freedom, pirouetting round the plumb which anchors it at the proper place and depth. It is altogether so novel, and apparently so complicated, that it is not likely to be viewed with much favour; but as the Count de Moira says he kills more fish with it than his friends do on other tackle, I hope some of my readers will give it a fair trial, which I confess I have not done. Mr. R. B. Marston wrote of this tackle—and I entirely agree with him: "You often come across breaks and bays in beds of weeds and reeds which line the bank; they are often too small to try the ordinary

live-bait tackle in, because the bait would swim into the reeds at once. It is impossible to keep the bait on an ordinary paternoster at the exact depth, unless you are almost over the spot, and hold the line taut all the time; directly the line slackens, the bait fouls the weeds at the bottom, and might remain there a month without attracting the notice of a fish. With Count de Moira's invention, your bait must swim round, *supported* (at any depth you please) by the cork, and anchored in one spot. In an open water, with bottom clear of weeds, we should prefer the ordinary live-snap float-tackle, or the live-snap paternoster."

The Leger is a very useful piece of tackle when rivers are in flood, or bank-high and coloured. At such times numbers

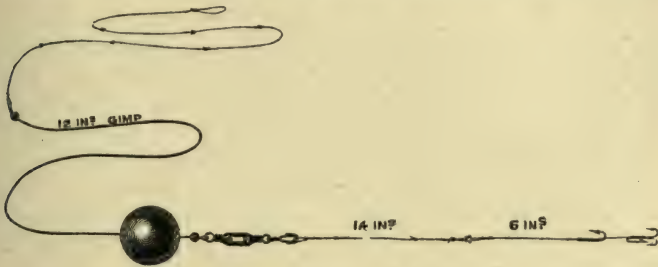


FIG. 29. PIKE LEGER.

of pike will often collect in one small, shallow eddy, and feed very near the bottom. The construction of the leger is shown in Fig. 29. It is either composed entirely of very fine patent gimp—the few inches near the hook, which should be of ordinary gimp, excepted—or it should be, for the most part, of salmon-gut, knotted as already described (page 37), but with the bullet working on a length of gimp, and with a short piece of gimp attached to the hooks. As the bait is near the bottom, I think a single hook is less likely to get caught up than any other arrangement; but with good-sized baits it is almost necessary to have something larger, such as the tackle shown in the illustration. The end triangle should be fixed *high up*

on the side of the bait, near the dorsal fin. If fixed low down on the side it is perpetually catching on the bottom.

After what I have written on paternostering, I need say little concerning the use of the leger. Cast out the tackle where you expect pike to be, keep a taut line, and on feeling a bite act exactly as you would if fishing with a paternoster.

Playing and Landing the pike in a satisfactory manner are only to be learned through experience, but there are one or two useful hints worth mentioning. After the fish is hooked, as a rule, keep the rod as much as possible at an angle of about 45deg. Have an eye to any weeds, piles, roots, and such-like, and keep your fish as far away from them as you are able. If the fish becomes weeded, or seems likely to attain that undesirable condition, get below him, keep the line as tight as you dare, and pull *down* stream. When the pike comes to the surface, opens his mouth, and shakes his head, as he probably will do if you hold him too hard, lower the point of the rod to the surface of the water, and put a less heavy strain on the fish. Always play him as much as possible on the reel, checking him in his runs by placing a finger on the rim of the reel (unless the mechanical check in the reel is a strong one, and as much as the tackle will bear), and wind him in when you are able to. If he leaps, slacken the line until he is in the water again. Beware of his getting round the punt-pole, if one is in the water. Beware of nails on the bottom of the boat, especially if it is an Irish craft. When the fish yields to you, get him near you, and gaff him. I usually gaff over the back of the fish, and not in the belly. Get the gaff in position, and then, with a sharp pull, send it in, and lift the fish out without a moment's delay. Gaff near the tail rather than the shoulder or middle, especially if the fish is large, for a pike gaffed in the tail is helpless, and can only wag his head slowly, while if gaffed anywhere else he can splash about with his tail, and perhaps get off, or break the gaff.

CHAPTER IV.

DEAD-BAIT FISHING.

*Modern Spinning Flights—Traces—How to Prevent Kinking—
Thames Style of Spinning—Trent Style of Spinning—
Preserved Baits—Eel-tail—Artificial Spinning Baits.*



DEAD-BAITS, when used in pike-fishing, are either arranged so that they spin when drawn through the water, or are placed on trolling-tackle, in which case they do not spin. Spinning baits are either cast out some distance, and drawn back through the water to the angler, or are trailed at the back of a boat. This trailing is often called trolling in Scotland and Ireland, a misnomer which has doubtless caused some little confusion in the minds of anglers. Trolling proper is the use of a dead-bait which does not spin, and is worked with a sink-and-draw motion in the water. I propose now to describe spinning for pike, leaving the subject of trolling for the following chapter.

Spinning Flights are of two kinds—those which cause the bait to spin by curving its tail, and those which spin the bait by means of some simple mechanical contrivance. Of the first kind, the Thames spinning flights are most commonly used, and though, if put on by a skilful hand, they give the bait a brilliant spin, they hook badly, and the percentage of fish secured to the number of runs is small. They consist of three or four triangles, about lin. apart, above which is a movable lip-hook.

A hook of the lowest triangle is caught in the tail of the bait; the other triangles are fastened to its side, and the lip-hook (see page 61) passes through the lips. In fixing these hooks, the tail of the bait is curved, and the hooks (a bad point about these flights) lie in the curve. This can, however, be got over by slipping a piece of gimp, to which a triangle is attached, down to the lip-hook, and sticking one of the hooks of the triangle on the *outside* of the curve, about the middle of the fish. I am almost obliged to mention this tackle because it is so commonly used, but I strongly advise my readers to have nothing to do with it. One reason why it is so bad is that it has too many hooks. The more hooks the more chance of hooking, seems at first sight a sound proposition, but it will not bear examination. If to pull one hook into a jack requires a force of $\frac{1}{4}$ lb., to pull in two hooks requires a force of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.—and the more the hooks to be pulled in, the greater the force required. Now, if we have three triangles and a lip-hook on one flight, there are frequently four separate hook-points (say, two on each of two triangles) in the jack's mouth, the resistance of which has to be overcome before the jack is hooked. Now I will go so far as to assert that it is impossible to strike hard enough with light tackle to get four large hooks in over the barb. In all my experience I have never found a jack really hooked with more than two hooks well over the barb, though the *points* of other hooks might be sticking in his mouth. It follows that the large number of triangles in the Thames flight more often than not prevents the pike being properly hooked, and this theory is borne out in practice. I believe that, when pike are caught with this tackle, they either seize only the end triangle, or hook themselves in their struggles after they have shaken some of the triangles out of their mouths.

As pike are not very likely to be hooked unless the hooks are brought against their lower jaw (the upper jaw being hard and bony), it follows that, with those tackles in which all the hooks lie close along one side of the bait, the hooks will as often come against the upper jaw of the pike as the lower, and a large number of fish will not get hooked. For this reason I

much prefer those tackles in which the bait is guarded on both sides.

Of the more modern flights which spin the bait by curving its tail, the two most generally approved of by pike-fishermen are the Francis flight and the Pennell flight. It will be seen from a glance at Figs. 30, 31, 32, and 33, that they are very similar in principle. The curve in the tail of the bait in each depends on a reversed hook, and one, or, at most, two triangles are deemed sufficient to hook the pike. I can speak from experience very highly of both these tackles, though they do not carry out the principle I think so admirable of having both sides of the bait guarded; but they do hook well, and the reason of their success is, no doubt, owing to the use of flying triangles. From the good results I have obtained with both these tackles, and also with the Chapman Spinner, which I will shortly describe, I am inclined to think that the principle to be carried out in spinning flights is to have triangles on both sides of the bait when a hook of each triangle is fixed into the bait, but to have a flying triangle when only one side of the bait is guarded.

The Lip-hook shown in the Pennell flights is an improvement over the old pattern, in being made entirely of steel, and in the angle the eyes make with the shank of the hook. I find lip-hooks very apt to rust under the gimp. This source of weakness (for the rust eats into the gimp) might be avoided by making the lip-hooks of phosphor-bronze.

The diagrams show so clearly how the baits are mounted on these flights that a long, written description is unnecessary;



FIGS. 30 AND 31. FRANCIS FLIGHT (BAITED AND UNBAITED).

but the following points are worthy of mention: If the bait is a gudgeon, the lip-hook should be put through the top lip,

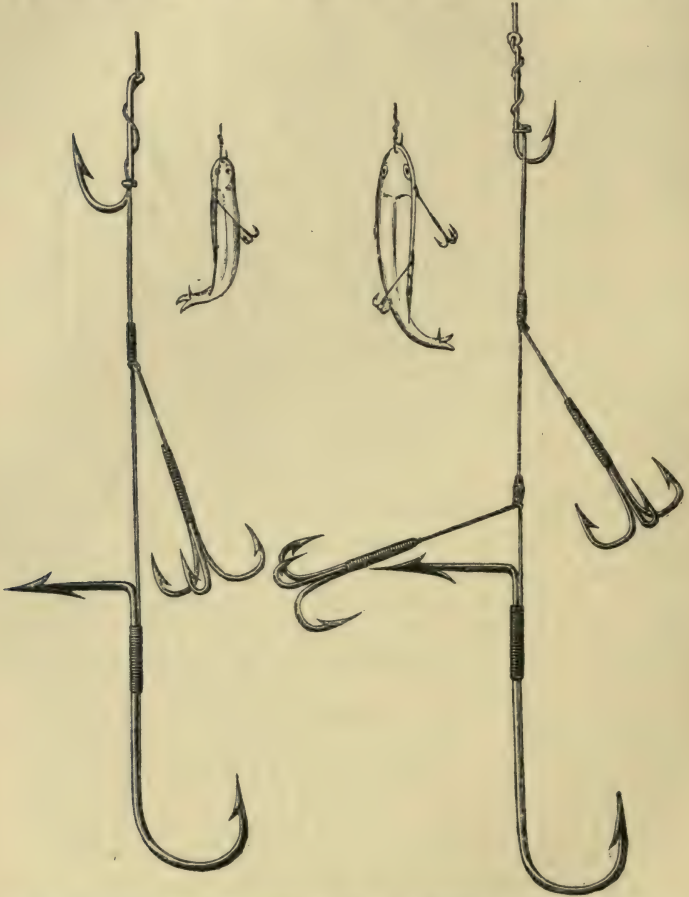


FIG. 32. PENNELL FLIGHT (BAITED AND UNBAITED) FOR SMALL BAITS.

FIG. 33. PENNELL FLIGHT (BAITED AND UNBAITED) FOR LARGE BAITS.

downwards; but if any other fish, through the under lip, upwards. The bait should lie perfectly straight down to the

commencement of the curve in its tail, and the principal strain should be on the lip-hook; from the lip-hook, therefore, to the tail-hook, the gimp should be rather loose than tight. When baiting, the tail-hook is adjusted first, and the lip-hook last.

Of the two flights mentioned, the angler can choose which pleaseth him best, unless, indeed, he prefers one of the contrivances which spin the bait by fans or some such means. But there is a simple piece of spinning tackle, a great favourite in the Midlands and Eastern Counties, which I advise him never to be without, for it will spin any bait without difficulty, and requires no skill in its adjustment. It is shown on a bait in Fig. 34, and it will be seen that it is nothing more than two

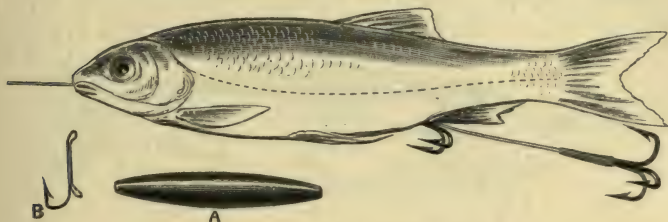


FIG. 34. A SIMPLE SPINNING TACKLE.

triangles at the end of a piece of gimp. To bait it in the way shown, it is necessary to attach the gimp to a baiting-needle,* and thread the fish from vent to mouth. The bait spins in a different manner to one mounted on a Pennell or Francis flight; but it is an attractive spin all the same, and the tackle hooks well. After the gimp is through the bait you can, if you please, slip a pipe-lead (A) down the gimp, and so into the belly of the bait, and follow with a lip-hook (B), the eyes of which must be large, to pass over the loop in the gimp.

Another way of using this tackle is to put the end of the gimp through a gill of the fish, and out of its mouth, and fix the triangles in the back of the bait, or put the end triangle on

* If the needle is lost, the gimp can be pushed through the bait by means of a piece of stick notched at the end, or an extempore needle can be made out of a piece of soda-water-bottle wire—facts worth remembering.

the opposite side of the bait to the threaded gill. The tackle so baited is shown in Fig. 35. It is improved by a fixed lip-hook, which has to be passed through the gill and brought out at the mouth—a delicate operation; or a sliding lip-hook can, of course, be passed down the gimp after the triangles are placed.

There is yet another method of using this tackle—one which I can strongly recommend; but the addition of a lip-hook and 4in. of copper wire, one end of which is turned into an eye, and the eye bent at right angles to the rest of the wire, is essential. This simple tackle hooks well, is easy to adjust, and spins the bait as well as any other flight. To adjust it, stick the lip-hook through both lips (the top lip first, if a gudgeon) of the bait, and catch one hook of each triangle on the side, leaving the gimp between the lip-hook and the triangles rather loose than tight; then pass the end of the gimp through the eye of the wire.



FIG. 35. NOTTINGHAM SPINNING TACKLE.

The wire can then be brought down the gimp, and thrust right down the centre of the bait until it is buried as far as the eye which rests against the lip-hook. The tail of the bait can then be bent. The triangles should be on the *outside* of the curve.*

A few words now as to the second, but not inferior, class of spinning tackles, and I have done with the flighty portion of my subject. For years the best flight which spins a straight bait has been the well-known Chapman Spinner (see Fig. 36). Above the fans should be a small brass swivel, and 10in. of 000 patent stained gimp. The hooks should be mounted on silver gimp, to match the bait, and, if you are very particular, have the hooks silver-plated and the bindings of the triangles covered with red paint (French polish and powdered red paint).

* Allcock's Imperceptible Spinner, a capital flight, is made on this principle.

The fault in the original pattern was that, the gimp being fastened to a ring between the fans, the fans used to be dragged away from the bait. By mounting the spinner according to the method shown in the illustration, the pull is direct on to the bait, and the fans keep their position. I believe the Chapman Spinner to be the best form of spinning flight extant. It spins any description of bait; it hooks well, for there is no curve in the bait to guard the hooks, and the percentage of fish run and lost is very small. It is, moreover, a great economiser of baits. Delicate fish, such as bleak, can be used on it for a considerable length of time, and it spins a bait well in dead water, and even if pulled down stream. Another advantage is that, a good-sized piece of lead being in the bait, only sufficient weight

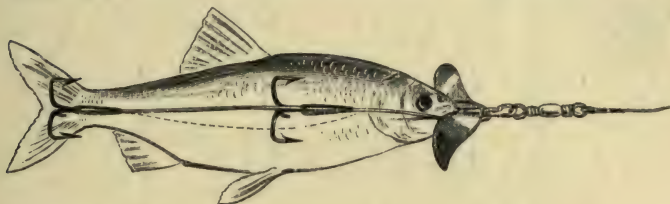


FIG. 36. CHAPMAN SPINNER.*

is necessary on the trace to prevent the line kinking. The fans, in my opinion, add to the attractiveness of the bait, especially if they are silver-plated. The Francis, Pennell, and old Thames flights, can only be properly adjusted after some little practice, while a baby could arrange a bait on the Chapman Spinner.

A new form of this tackle has recently been brought out by Messrs. Bartleet & Sons, of Redditch. It is called the Archer Spinner (Fig. 37), and is designed to prevent the fans dragging away from the head of the bait. The fans of this spinner are movable, and have to be opened for the spike to be inserted in the bait. When the bait is in position, the fans close down upon it, and the spikes run into its gills, and hold it firm. This

* Brass swivels can, and should, be stained in the same manner as gimp (see p. 33).

ingenious tackle can be used with or without leads, leads being sold which can be slipped on the spike when necessary. Artificial roach, dace, and gudgeon, are also sold for use with this tackle; they are run on the spike, and are kept in position

the same way as natural baits. The Archer Spinner has been so lately introduced that I have not been able to give it a lengthy trial; but so far as I can see at present, it is an admirable tackle. I do not, however, like the way the hooks are placed, much preferring the arrangement in Fig. 36.

I have spoken rather enthusiastically concerning Chapman Spinners, not on theoretical grounds, but because, having used them for many years, I have always been successful with them. The three largest pike I ever hooked ran at a bait on a Chapman spinner. Of the trio, one broke my rod, and then my trace; the second almost swallowed the bait (the water was clear, and I saw the fish plainly), and then bit the gimp; and the third (25lb.) was duly

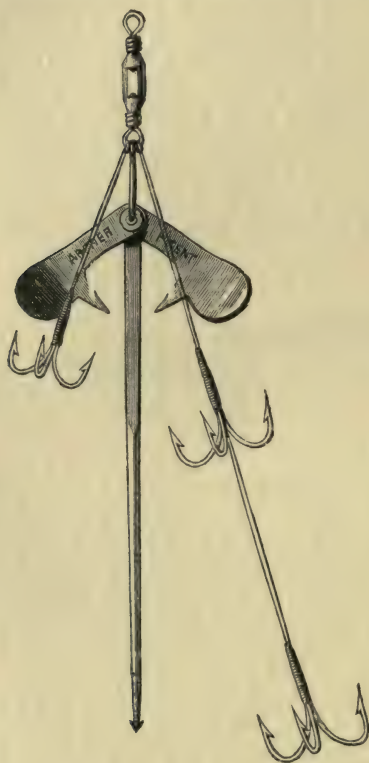


FIG. 37. ARCHER SPINNER.

gaffed, and now adorns my dining-room. Neither of the two fish which escaped got off the hooks.

There are various other mechanical contrivances for making baits spin; but the only one worth notice is the *Fishing*

Gazette Spinner—a small, Archimedean screw, which is placed on the line some distance above the bait, and causes it to revolve.

The Trace is the portion of the line between the flight and the running tackle. It consists of a lead to sink the bait, swivels, and two lengths of gut or gimp. If gimp is preferred, I can strongly recommend Warner's patent wire-centred gimp for the purpose. It is so strong that the *finest size* (000) can be used; it should, of course, be stained (see page 32). About the same thickness is stout salmon-gut, which is also frequently made up into traces. It should be soaked in ink (see p. 38) for a few minutes, to give it a neutral tint, and then washed in cold water. The lengths should be tied together by the knot shown in Fig. 17 (page 38), but before being tied they should be well soaked. At one time I always used twisted gut for traces, but now prefer the patent gimp; it is less expensive than gut, more durable, stronger, and equally fine.



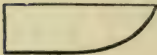
FIG. 38. IMPROVED LEAD FOR SPINNING TRACES.

The best form of lead for the trace is that shown in Fig. 38. It is made by Farlow & Co., and has probably had more thought expended on its production than any other piece of pike-tackle. For many years sea-fishermen, when mackerel-fishing, have been in the habit of arranging their sinkers below the line, so that the line could not twist; and the principle has now, thanks mainly to Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell,* found its way into fresh-water fishing. It is the only way to prevent kinking. It is important to have *two swivels immediately below the lead*. I prefer brass swivels, as they do not rust, and I have never found them break. They should, as I have already said, be stained in the same manner as gimp. These leads, with swivels attached, should be kept in several sizes, as with a large bait a heavy lead is required, with a

* Mr. Pennell's latest idea is a "solid, half-sugarloaf-shaped lead." I much prefer the one illustrated.

small one a small lead, and more weight is necessary on the trace in rivers than in lakes. It will be seen from the illustration that these leads are easily shifted. No more swivels* are required on the trace than those shown.

Mr. Wood, of Bellwood, Ripon, a very successful pike-fisherman, has invented a simple and useful lead for the spinning trace. Out of sheet lead about $\frac{1}{12}$ in. thick he cuts small, oval pieces of various sizes, an average size being about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide. These oval pieces are then cut across the middle, and each forms two sinkers. They are put on the line as a saddle is put on a horse, the pointed end being, of course, uppermost, and when bent on are of the



shape shown in the annexed woodcut. I have not given this lead an extensive trial, but feel sure it is a first-rate invention, as it prevents kinking, and is not easily seen by the fish. They are very easily made. Bambridge, of Eton, sells them, I believe, but they could be made by anybody.

So much, then, for the materials of which the trace is composed. Its proportions are usually as follows: Below the lead, attached by a *small* loop to the lowest of the double swivels, should be 3ft., or a trifle less, of gut or gimp, terminated by either a large loop or a hook-swivel (see page 44). Above the lead, and looped on to it as shown in Fig. 38, should be 2ft. or $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft.† of gut or gimp, which may, if you please, be a trifle stouter than that below the lead. A somewhat neater arrangement, is to have the gimp on which is mounted the flight of hooks 3ft. or a trifle more, in length, and attach the small loop at the end to the hook of the double swivel shown in Fig. 38.

We are sometimes so circumstanced that Farlow's Improved Leads are not to be had when most wanted. What, then, is to be done? For answer, I say, put a swivel or two on 5ft. of gimp, 3ft. from one end; take an ordinary pipe-lead, run

* Messrs. Alcock & Son have recently made a great improvement in swivels by inserting two collars or washers round the wire inside the box.

† When trailing bait behind boats in large lakes, provided no casting has to be done, the lead can, with advantage, be placed 4ft. or even 5ft. from the bait.

6in. of fishing-line through it, and simply tie it on tightly to the gimp, just above the swivels. An anti-kinking trace may be thus made in ten minutes. Once, when very hard up for a piece of lead, I lashed an old nail on to my line, and took some good fish, notwithstanding my rough-and-ready tackle. There is no sport which offers greater opportunities for the exercise of ingenuity than angling, and the all-round fisherman should be full of expedients.

Many attempts have been made to invent a lead which may be easily removed from the trace, and smaller or larger ones put in its place. The most generally used is the *Fishing Gazette* Lead. The lead is on the shank of a safety-pin, and the line is wound round the pin proper. I have found these leads very useful. Mr. Wood's Saddle-lead, already described (page 68), is easily taken off the trace, and a smaller or larger one put on in its place. The Farlow Lead, also, is very easily removed for one larger or smaller, as may be desired.

The information I have given on spinning tackle will, I hope, prove sufficient for even the densest of mortals; but there is something to be added. A considerable amount of judgment and discretion is necessary with regard to the coarseness of the tackle and the weight of the lead. Large baits, strong streams, and deep water, each and all necessitate heavy leads. Small baits, still waters, and shallow streams and lakes, necessitate light leads. If there is lead in the bait, less is required on the trace. For well-fished, clear streams, in summer, fine tackle is absolutely necessary, except on windy days, when the line is not noticed by the fish. When the water is coloured, the tackle need not be fine. In very weedy waters, the best fish will be lost unless the tackle is strong. In extensive sheets of water, where the fish run very large, extremely fine tackle is only advisable on calm, hot, sunny days in summer, when small baits should be used.

The Thames Style of Spinning is more commonly practised than any other. It is easier than the Trent method, and enables the angler to cast the bait with great accuracy—an important consideration in summer, when the bait has often to be worked in the runs between weed-beds. The process

is simple. Uncoil a few yards of line—a dozen is sufficient for a first attempt—on to the ground or the floor of the punt, as the case may be. Hold the rod in the right hand, at an angle midway between an upright and the ground-level; let the bait, trace, and 1ft. or so of line, hang from the rod point. Hold the line lightly in the left hand, about 2ft. below the winch. Swing the bait back a little; then swing it forward, with increasing swiftness, until it is on its way to the point to which you wish to cast; then let the line run through the left hand, and the bait flies out over the water. If you have cast too hard, and the bait seems inclined to continue its journey to the meadow the other side of the river, close your fingers on the line, so as to put on a slight drag, and, after some practice, you will be able to make the bait fall where you wish.

A cast of 30yds. or 40yds. does not necessitate very much effort if the rod-top suits the bait. If the bait and trace are light, the rod-top should be long and supple, but shorter and stiffer if the bait and trace are heavy. If these conditions are fulfilled, the spring in the rod will do a very great deal of the work of casting, if the angler will only let it. At the same time, the rod can easily be too whippy, for a certain amount of stiffness is necessary, or the hooks cannot be struck into the pike. Bait, trace, hooks, line, and rod—all should harmonise. If the rod is very stiff, and the line fine, the line may break if a big pike is struck. If many and large hooks are used, and the rod-top is weak, the hooks will not be forced in over the barb. If the bait is large, and the hooks small, the pike will not get hooked. If the bait is small, and the hooks large, a pike with any self-respect will not look at the bait, even if it can be got to spin under those circumstances.

Well, the bait having reached the water, do not commence to draw it towards you for about four seconds. It is as well that it should sink a few feet; unless, of course, the spot where you are fishing is shallow, or the weeds come near the surface. While waiting, pass the line under the first finger of the right hand, which clasps the rod. The rod is pointing

towards the bait, and nearly parallel with the water. Now commence to spin. First draw the bait through the water about 3ft. by a pull from the rod, keeping the rod-point low; then, with the left hand, take the line close to the first finger of the right hand, and pull the line as far as you can. As you do this, let the rod-point work round towards the bait. Then a pull from the rod, followed by another pull of the line, and the bait will keep up a *continuous* and even spin. So far as my experience goes, a continuous and steady spin is most killing. It is for this reason, probably, that men who trail a bait behind a boat catch so many pike. Pike often follow a bait for some distance, and if the bait ceases to spin, they of course get a glimpse behind the scenes, and realise that the whole thing is a play, and not real (fish) life as they supposed.

For fishing in shallow water we should, of course, use a light lead—sometimes none;* but where, in a river, shallows and deeps alternate, the pike-fisher should use a lead of moderate weight (about $\frac{1}{3}$ oz.), and spin quickly over the shallows, keeping the rod-point high, and slowly over the deeper portions of the river, keeping the rod-point low. I have already indicated where pike are to be found in winter and summer on pages 9 to 16, and so, in answer to the question, "Where shall we spin?" I need only reply, "Where the jack are."

When fishing a wide river in winter, float down it in a punt, and cast on each side alternately. If the river is narrow, the punt should be dropped down one side, and the casts be made across the river, and rather down stream than up; and about every fifth cast should be made straight down stream, along the course which the punt will take. When fishing from the bank the procedure is similar. Fish across, rather down than up, and every now and again cast down stream under your own bank. Fish every yard of the water. If the river is very clear, the fish can see the bait for some distance, and therefore spin higher than you would were the

* Mr. A. Cholmondeley-Pennell advises that, when no lead is required on the trace, a short piece of lead-wire (the weight of which is not appreciable) be wound round the trace, above the swivel, and about lin. of the end of the wire be allowed to stick out at right angles to the trace. This is to prevent kinking.

water coloured. In warm weather spin higher than in cold weather. Always be careful not to tread on the line.

In summer the weeds prevent anything approaching methodical casting. As a matter of fact, beginners do not often attempt spinning where weeds are plentiful; but more experienced anglers frequently have good sport by casting down runs between weed-beds by the sides of rushes, and in nooks and corners which can only be reached by the most accurate casting.

In very hot weather it is desirable to spin near the surface, but in cold weather spin deep. If the pike will not come at the spinning bait fished in the ordinary way, try letting the bait sink nearly to the bottom, and then draw it up obliquely, repeating this process until the bait is worked in. If the bottom is sandy, let the bait sink as far as it can go between each draw. If the pike will not look at a spinning bait, try some other method—*e.g.*, paternostering.

When a fish is felt, strike at once, and hard; but on the subject of striking the reader had better turn to page 51, where the matter is discussed at length. One point should be borne in mind—that the larger and more numerous the hooks, the harder must the strike be, and *vice versâ*. Some hints on playing and landing pike are given on page 58. The gaff is far superior to the landing-net for landing a pike hooked on spinning tackle. If the net is used, the hooks of the flight are apt to get fearfully and wonderfully mixed up in the meshes, and much time is lost.

The rate at which a spinning bait should be pulled through the water is a subject on which anglers differ considerably. Some have even gone so far as to say how many draws of the line should be made in a minute. My own practice is to draw the bait through the water as steadily as circumstances will allow, keeping the bait spinning all the time. Pike do not often dash at a spinning bait with the rapidity of trout, and many are lost by fishing too quickly. Therefore, draw the bait as slowly as you can, *but keep it spinning*. If you are drawing the bait up stream, you can fish slower than if casting across the stream, for the current spins the bait. Leads which are too

heavy sometimes make one draw the bait too fast, for if not drawn fast the bait sinks, and catches on the bottom. When arranging a bait on a flight, do not be satisfied unless it spins well when drawn slowly through the water. It is easy enough to make a bait spin when drawn at such a rate that no pike would think of seizing it.

In very frosty weather the line will freeze, and ice will accumulate in the rings of the rod. Grease on the line is the remedy for this unpleasant state of things. Palm oil is good for the purpose; so is castor oil. Use some butter scraped off a sandwich if no other grease is available. Mr. Jardine recommends a piece of wool soaked in castor oil to be tied on the rod, in the ring next the winch, and also in the top ring. I have never tried this plan, but have no doubt of its efficacy. If you have no grease with you, and your rings are full of ice, do not cut out the ice with a penknife, but get your man to put the rings one by one in his mouth, and so thaw the ice. A line cuts and breaks very easily when frozen.

One great objection to the method of spinning I have described is that the coils of line on the ground are apt to catch in bits of stick, tufts of grass, and other catchable things; about one out of every three casts being thereby spoilt. Thames fishermen sometimes get over this by gathering up the line, as they draw it in, in their left hand. The method is peculiar, and not easily described. First, take the line between the first finger and thumb of the left hand, then turn the hand, palm upwards, so that the line lies across the fingers. Next, bend down the little finger over the line, and turn the hand round (palm still upwards), so that the fingers point towards the body. The result of this action is that the line doubles round the little finger, and comes between the finger and thumb again. The little finger is then withdrawn from that loop of line, and a fresh piece of line taken round it. This method is useless where fast spinning is necessary, or very long casts have to be made; but I have found it most valuable when spinning slowly against the stream. A bait which spins easily is essential. This method is also useful

for working a paternoster slowly along the bottom, and sometimes when trolling (see Chapter V.).

Another plan is to let each length of line drawn in hang in a coil over the left hand. This plan is not difficult to learn, and is, I think, better than the other, as it enables spinning to be carried on at any rate of speed. The angler should be careful to make each draw of the line about the same length, as, if the coils are not of the same size, the line is apt to entangle on the cast being made. This plan cannot be followed if the line has the least tendency to kink.

The Nottingham Style of Spinning is greatly in favour with many anglers. It requires more skill and practice than the Thames method, from which it differs in the casting being done directly off the reel, and the use of an *undressed*, plaited, silk line. I have already described, on page 53, how the cast is made. When the bait has fallen on the water, it is allowed to sink as little or as much as may be necessary, and the reel is then wound steadily round, until the bait is within about 6ft. of the angler. The advantages of this plan are—absence of loose line to catch in anything, and the steady progress of the bait through the water. The one disadvantage is the difficulty of casting with great accuracy. As this may be questioned, I may as well say that I formed my opinion, not only from my own experience, but also from seeing the performances of some of the best Trent anglers, at one of the bait-casting tournaments. When one is casting in the Thames style, and the line has a tendency to kink (it will never kink if the tackle described in this book is used), it is a good plan to move the button at the back of the reel, and so take off the check, and cast from the reel in the Nottingham style.

There is a reel of novel construction, from which, I believe, a lighter bait can be cast than from any other. It is called the Malloch reel. When the bait is to be cast, the reel is twisted round, and remains stationary while the line uncoils off the side of it. Take a reel of cotton, pull some cotton off the *end* of it, and you have before you a working model of Mr. Malloch's invention. The reel is then twisted back to its proper position, and the line wound in. A

great and very serious objection to this reel is that each coil puts a twist in the line, the result being that if, by any chance, the line hangs loose, it kinks up at once. The reel does not work in a satisfactory manner unless as much line is wound on it as it will hold. A fine, plaited, *undressed*, silk line should be used. Anglers who like this reel for spinning might possibly get over the kinking difficulty by using the old-fashioned trace, in which the lead is threaded on the line, arranging their bait so that, in spinning, it untwines the twists put in the line by the reel. With the more modern leads (see page 67), the spin of the bait does not affect the line above the lead.

Trailing is a word detestable to most pike-anglers of the South of England, for trailing is a system of fishing by which the veriest duffers can, and do, catch pike. It simply consists in dragging a spinning bait after a boat. In very large lakes it is the best and almost the only way to catch pike; but in rivers it is inexcusable. The secrets of successful trailing are to row the boat steadily and slowly; to adjust the bait carefully on the flight, so that it spins properly; to use a light lead, letting out abundance of line; and to trail the bait where the fish are. In large lakes there is no better plan than to row round, and as close as possible to, weed-beds; and though the weeds may frequently catch the bait, that nuisance should be borne uncomplainingly, and, sooner or later, a fish will be brought to creel.

There are two reels—the Sun-and-Planet and the Burne—either of which might be useful when trailing. When the line is running out, the barrels of these reels revolve without moving the handles, and the rod can be laid down without any fear of a smash should a fish seize the bait. With an ordinary reel the handles are apt to hit the boat, and, by checking the free run of the fish, cause a break.

Natural Spinning Baits.—The best bait for spinning generally is a small dace. It is bright, tough, lasting, and pike have a decided liking for it. A small chub also spins well; but where chub are preserved, their use as baits is a

mistake. Gudgeon also spin splendidly, but not being very bright baits, should be used in clear water only. Roach may be made to spin, after a fashion, on a Chapman Spinner, or on the tackle shown in Fig. 34. They should not be despised, when nothing better can be obtained. Bleak are very favourite baits of mine. In form and colour they leave nothing to be desired, but they lack toughness. On a Chapman Spinner, however, they last quite as long as do dace or gudgeon on Francis or Pennell flights. I believe I have caught more pike on them than on any other spinning bait. Sprats and smelts are also good baits, if mounted on a Chapman or Archer Spinner, with no lead on the spear. As a matter of fact, the pike-fisher has to put up with any baits he can get; but when he has a choice, he should be guided by the following well-established rules on the subject: Fish built on fine lines spin better than corpulent, deep-bellied fish, such as roach, rudd, and bream; bright baits should be used on rough, dark days, and especially when the water is coloured, more sombre baits being best when the water is clear; *when there is no wind, and the water is very low and bright, use an exceptionally small bait and fine tackle*; in winter use larger baits than in summer. When the water is very thick, spinning is not much use. The only chance then of taking a fish on spinning tackle is to bait with a very large dace or a chub, and to spin slowly near the bottom.

Preserved Baits.—Of late years the practice of preserving spinning baits has come very much into vogue—and an excellent practice it is too. I am quite sure that, for pike, preserved baits are as killing as fresh ones. The most common preservative is spirits of wine. The baits, after being caught and killed, should be wiped or dabbed dry, and then laid on a dry cloth for a couple of hours, to rid them of the remaining outside moisture. They are then put in a wide-mouthed bottle, and spirits of wine poured over them. A good deal of grease comes out of the baits during the first fortnight; and it is as well, though not absolutely necessary, to move them at the end of that time into fresh spirits; they will then keep very much brighter than if left in the mixture of spirits and grease. The spirits in the

first bottle can be used over and over again for fresh lots of bait. I have before me a bottleful of sprats which were pickled after this method about six months ago. They are now as silvery as when first put into the spirits, and exceedingly tough. Bleak* make splendid spinning baits preserved after this fashion. Baits may also be pickled in salt, or painted with glycerine. King's Preservative,† a powder which has to be mixed with water, is as good as, if not better than, spirits of wine for preserving baits.

There is a bait made out of the tail of an eel, which requires special tackle, and which should, I think, find a place among the preserved baits. I have never tried it, but it has been very favourably mentioned by several writers on angling. Its general appearance may be gathered from Fig. 39. It is made in the following manner: Skin an eel to within about 6in. of the tail, and cut off the flesh; then cut the skin rather more than 1in. above the flesh. Take a large sneck or round-bend hook, mounted on gimp (on which is a pierced shot), put the point of the hook in at the cut end of the eel, and bring it out as shown in the illustration. Then gather the loose skin up over the shot, which is resting on the top of the shank, and tie it round tightly with thread. Next turn so much of the skin as remains above the tie back towards the tip of the tail, and sew down the edges, so forming an artificial head. Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell says of these baits that if placed in plenty of coarse, dry salt, they will keep for several weeks, and *improve* by keeping; but before being used they should, if possible, be allowed to soak in fresh water for ten or fifteen hours, to restore their brilliancy and plumpness. Mr. Pennell also says that a small eel can be mounted with



FIG. 39. EEL-TAIL SPINNING BAIT.

* My best pike was taken in Ireland on a Thames bleak which had been in pickle three or four years.

† Sold at 157, Commercial Road, London.

advantage on one of his flights, and that a good-sized eel can be used in the same manner, if shortened by taking a piece out of the middle, and sewing the cut ends together again with strong Holland thread.



FIG. 40. SPOON-BAIT.



FIG. 41. CLIPPER-BAIT.

Artificial Spinning Baits are simply legion; but the old-fashioned spoon-bait (Fig. 40), with certain improvements, still holds its own among the best of them. It is now made with each side half gold-plate and half silver-plate; and what

are termed "Norwich" spoons are fitted with a glass eye. The Clipper (Fig. 41) is one of the best of the artificials; it not only attracts the pike, but hooks them in a most satis-



FIG. 42. THE PHANTOM MINNOW.

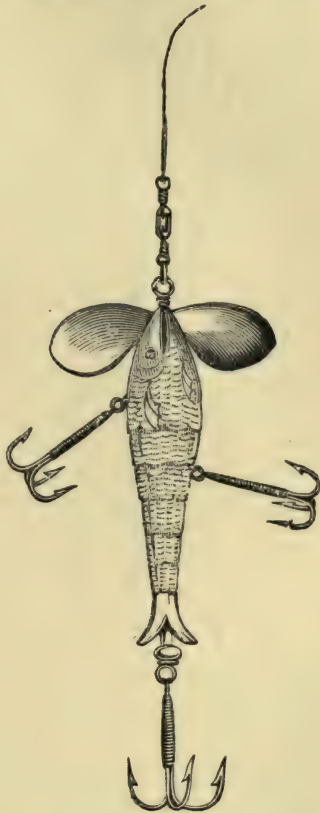


FIG. 43. THE CLEOPATRA.

factory manner. The angler should always keep three sizes of this bait, using the small size on calm, bright days.

Phantom minnows, also, are rare good baits, but rather ex-

pensive ones, as they soon get "chawed" up. They are made either of silk, sole-skin, or snake-skin. The silk phantoms are the least durable, but I fancy they take more fish than the other kinds. They are softer, and collapse more thoroughly when seized by the pike than do the sole-skin baits. In some waters red phantoms are very killing; coloured blue, they are supposed to show best in thick water. I have taken many pike on phantoms silvered all over. They should be kept in several sizes. Two triangles at the shoulder (see Fig. 42) are unnecessary, and spoil the spin of the bait; one is sufficient.



FIG. 44. THE DEVON MINNOW.



FIG. 45. THE COMET.

The Cleopatra (Fig. 43), a flexible, metal fish, is another bait which I have found very killing, particularly in the medium and small sizes. Then there is that excellent bait the Devon minnow (Fig. 44), which has probably caught more trout, pike, and salmon than any other bait ever invented. It should, of course, be large, mounted on gimp for pike, and the hooks should be strong.

The Comet (Fig. 45), made by Bambridge, of Eton, is also a most excellent artificial spinning bait, and has accounted for many pike. Hardy's Halcyon bait—a bunch of peacock's harl headed by two fans—is now made in large sizes for

pike. I have not yet been able to give it a trial, but it ought to be very killing. The Lightning Spinner is the greatest novelty in spinning baits. It is something like two Clippers, one above another, revolving in different directions. Pike with any self-respect ought to leave any river in which it is used; but I learn that it has proved itself to be an attractive bait.

With regard to artistic representations of fish, I may remark that they usually prove more attractive to beginners in the gentle art than to the pike. Why, I cannot say. They certainly ought to kill, for they are beautifully made. But, as a rule, they don't. Artificial pike-baits are almost invariably badly mounted. The gimp is too thick, the hooks weak in the wire and badly tempered, the bindings insecurely fastened off, and instead of brass or bronze rings, brazed up at the opening, are often fitted with split steel rings, which rust and break. The gimp at the head of the bait should be fine patent 000 or 00 (see page 31); but any gimp to which hooks are attached should be No. 1 ordinary silver kind, unless the bait is a dark one. The triangles should be similar to those shown in Fig. 18, and should be stout in the wire; and anything in the nature of steel or iron—hooks excepted—should be plated, or replaced by brass or bronze.

All fish-hooks, and those of artificial baits in particular, should be kept very sharp. The angler should, therefore, carry a watchmaker's or needle file, with which to occasionally touch up the sides of hook points.

Extraordinary and novel baits often kill well for a time, but after a while the pike seem to get used to them. The baits I have mentioned are old favourites, to which this remark does not seem to apply.



CHAPTER V.

DEAD-BAIT FISHING (Continued).

Trolling with the Dead Gorge—Improved Adjustable Gorge-hook—Trolling with Snap-tackle—Fly-fishing.



N the last chapter I divided fishing with dead-baits for jack into fishing with spinning baits and fishing with baits which do not spin. We now come to the second class, which is popularly called trolling with the dead gorge; and I shall also have something to say regarding a new trolling tackle, in which the objectionable features of the old method—the gorging, which involves the death of every pike hooked, large or small—is entirely done away with.

Trolling tackle is simple in the extreme. The only essentials, in addition to rod and line, are the hook and a baiting-needle. The old form, or, rather, a modification of the old form, of hook, devised by Mr. Pennell, is shown in Fig. 46. It should be mounted on 3ft. or 4ft. of fine, patent, stained gimp, with a loop at the end, to which the running line (rather fine than otherwise, and of dressed, plaited silk) is fastened by the knot shown on page 37. The hook is baited as follows: Fasten the loop at the end of the gimp to a baiting-needle (see page 49). Take a medium-sized bait—a gudgeon is as good as any, unless the water is much coloured, when a brighter bait is preferable—put the point of the needle in at its mouth, and bring it out exactly in the fork of the tail. Pull the gimp right through the bait,

and the lead on the shank of the hook into its belly as far as the hooks—which will have the semblance of moustachios on the bait—will allow. Then tie up the tail of the bait with a piece of thread after the method shown in Fig. 47. Some trollers cut off all the fins; others cut off the fins on one side only, which gives the bait a slight, and, I think, attractive, spin when it is drawn through the water. This is a good plan when the water fished is not very weedy. Another plan, which I used to follow in my trolling days (I have long given up trolling with the dead gorge on account of the small fish killed), is to cut off only the stronger rays of the largest fins. If the fins are left, they catch in the weeds, as every experienced troller knows well, and the bait soon gets worn out in consequence.* Mr. Pennell advises the tail to be cut off, and the gimp tied in the knot shown in Fig. 48. I have no hesitation in condemning this plan, which I have given a thorough trial, except for trolling baits used where they are never really required (*i.e.*, in waters clear of weeds). Weeds catch on the slightest projection, and the blunt tail, bristling with the cut rays of the caudal fin, are terrible weed-catchers. Then, again, it is very desirable that the pike when struck should retain the hook and send the bait up the line. This he cannot do when the gimp is tied in a knot; but the bait frequently slips up the line when the tail is tied as shown in Fig. 47. It is never a wise thing to tie gimp in knots. A knot in the gimp may very likely cause a break when the best fish of one's life is hooked.

It is very important that the hook should fit the bait, and the angler should keep hooks of several sizes in his tackle-



FIG. 46. GORGE TROLLING HOOK (OLD PATTERN).

* As trolling baits are drawn tail foremost through the water, their gills frequently get forced open and broken. To avoid this, a piece of thread is sometimes tied round the gills. I only adopt this plan when I am short of baits.

box. The lead must have plenty of room in the belly of the bait, and the double hooks should not be so wide that they

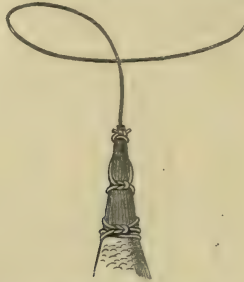


FIG. 47. TAIL OF TROLLING BAIT TIED WITH THREAD.

project much, and catch the weeds, or so narrow that the points stick into the gills of the bait, in which case, though the pike may pouch the bait, he will not get hooked. I have recently



FIG. 48. GIMP TIED IN TAIL OF TROLLING BAIT.



FIG. 49. ADJUSTABLE GORGE TROLLING HOOK.

designed, or, rather, improved upon, a gorge trolling tackle, with a view of making it adjustable to the bait. It is shown in

Fig. 49. Each lead can be taken on or off the gimp, and larger or smaller leads be put in its place. The double hook can also be removed, and be replaced by a smaller or larger one. The angler, provided with three or four double hooks of the pattern shown, and of various sizes, half-a-dozen leads (differing in weight), a piece of gimp, and a baiting-needle, can adjust his tackle to any bait within ordinary limits of size. It is also a decided advantage to have a flexible lead, for there is hardly any doubt that pike often refuse to gorge baits on the old-fashioned tackle on account of their unnatural stiffness. For use in shallow water, fewer leads should be in the bait than in deep water.

I have said that rod, line, hook, and baiting-needle, are the only pieces of tackle necessary for trolling. Personally, I like in addition about 1½yd. of fine, stained, patent gimp, terminated by a small hook-swivel (see page 44), placed between the running line and the gimp (in this case only 2ft. in length) to which the hook is attached. Trolling-baits often take into their heads to spin a little, especially if the fins are cut on one side only, and the swivel prevents the line from kinking. It is, moreover, easier to unhook the gimp when a new bait is required, than to untie the gimp from the line.

Trollers share with spinners the advantage of having to carry no live baits. It is a good plan to get several hooks baited before a start is made in the morning; but whether on hooks or not, the baits, which should be as fresh as possible, are best carried in a piece of damp linen, or laid in bran or nettles in a tin box, with plenty of small holes in the lid. But beware of the bran going sour, and tainting the baits, as it will do sometimes in less than twenty-four hours.

Before discussing the subject how to troll, it may be well to describe the

New Snap Trolling Tackle, to which I have already referred. A short history is attached to it. Some years ago I saw a snap trolling tackle belonging to Parrott, one of the Henley fishermen. He did not speak of it very highly, and the reason of its non-success was clearly the fact that, when baited, the gimp was attached to the head of the bait, which had in

consequence to be dropped into the water tail first, and could not be worked in small holes among weeds, as can ordinary trolling-baits, which dart down through the water head foremost. A snap trolling tackle was clearly a good idea, but it had still to be perfected. I soon arranged a tackle satisfactory in every respect but one—it necessitated the use of a baiting-needle; but in the end I devised the tackle shown in Fig. 50. On showing a sketch of this tackle to my friend, Mr. R. B. Marston, Editor of the *Fishing Gazette*, I found that he had worked out a very similar idea, in one respect much better than mine, in another not quite so good, and that he had given the tackle to Messrs. Hardy Brothers, of Alnwick, who have,

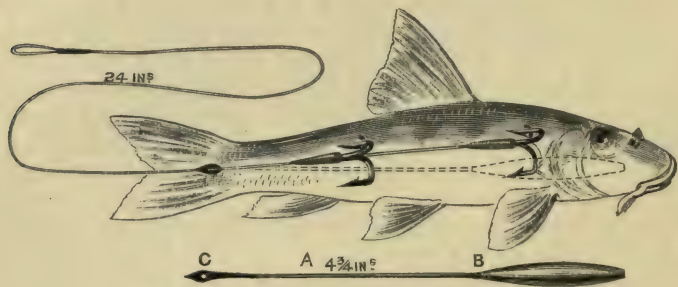


FIG. 50. THE AUTHOR'S SNAP TROLLING TACKLE.

I believe, taken out a patent for it. The illustration very clearly shows the construction, and method of baiting my tackle. The spike is first thrust through the bait from head to tail, the gimp is drawn through the eye at the end of the spike, and the top triangle fixed in. If one triangle is fixed on one side of the bait, about the middle, and the other is carried over the back, and fixed near the shoulder on the other side, the tackle is more certain than if the triangles are both on the same side. If the tail is tied at its base with a piece of thread, the spike will not tear out, as it sometimes does without this stay. I have only fished with this tackle a few times, but it seemed a most certain method of taking jack, and *every fish run was hooked and landed*. Mr. Marston's experiences with his tackle are similar.

It is obvious that the leaded spike must be just the right length for the bait, and that, unless it can be lengthened or shortened at will, spikes of various lengths must be kept. Mr. Marston has got over this difficulty by having the spike made to screw into the lead. It can thus be adjusted to any bait of ordinary dimensions. This is a great improvement on my idea; but Mr. Marston connects his end triangle with the blunt end of the lead by means of a hook-swivel, which I can safely say, from the experiments I have made, is unnecessary, and possibly disadvantageous, inasmuch as it keeps the bait close to the triangles after the jack is hooked. There is always, both in spinning and trolling, more chance of landing a jack when the bait has slipped out of his mouth, the hooks, of course, remaining in.

In Mr. Marston's tackle, the lead, when separated from the spike, can be used, if desired, on a spinning trace, or be put in the belly of the spinning bait. The spike by itself is available as a rough-and-ready baiting-needle.

I am inclined to think that in time this tackle will be more generally used than any other. Its advantages are manifold: It hooks well, can be worked at any depth and in any spot, except where the weeds are very dense. It is not so fatiguing to work as a spinning bait, and, as no swivels or lead are used on the line, it shows less than any other tackle, trolling gorge-tackle excepted. It requires no great amount of skill, and involves no trouble in the baiting, and is equally killing in winter and summer. Moreover, when small fish are hooked, they can be returned almost uninjured.

The snap trolling tackle can be used in a variety of ways, which is still another advantage. For instance, the two triangles can be arranged so as to make the bait spin, as illustrated in Figs. 34 and 35; or they can be used in float-fishing, if placed on the bait as shown in Fig. 24. They also form a capital hook for a paternoster (see page 54) if the end triangle is placed on the side or back of the bait, and a hook of the other triangle is placed through both its lips. In very truth, this is the *multum in parvo* of pike-tackles.

But enough of tackles; let us now pass to the important question,

How to Troll.—The rod should be rather long, for, as a general rule, anything in the nature of a long cast is not advisable when trolling. Taking, then, his rod, baits, &c., the angler strolls along the river bank, and drops his bait in every hole—even those not more than 1ft. in diameter—which he can see among the weeds. To reach points more distant than the rod is long, the angler should hold a couple of yards of slack line in his left hand, swing out his bait as if it were a pendulum, and, as it reaches a point in the air about 1ft. above the hole into which he wishes it to drop, he should both lower his rod-point and release the slack line. The bait will (or, rather, it should, for beginners invariably make a great splash) then dart, head foremost, into the water, and go at considerable speed nearly to the bottom, when the rod-point should be lifted, rather quickly than slowly, about a foot, and then be quickly depressed to allow the bait to again dart down a short distance. On its downward journey the bait should on no account be checked, as it will most certainly be if the rod-point is not lowered quickly and far enough. If a pike sees the bait, and is hungry, he will take it almost at once, and it is never worth while to sink the bait more than twice in one place.

When fishing from a punt or boat it is usual, on the Thames, to drift very slowly down stream, checking the punt with the pole, if necessary, from time to time, and searching each hole and corner as you pass along. Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell says, troll up stream, and with this I quite agree, if the stream is considerable; but otherwise, it is not necessary, and it is by no means an easy task to work a punt noiselessly, and without disturbing the fish, against a strong stream. Trolling with the dead gorge in a swift current is not by any means profitable. More often than not, the force of the water on the line pulls the bait out of the jack's mouth after he has seized it.

When trolling in water free from weeds, the bait may be cast out as if it were a spinning bait, and worked in by draws of the rod, the rod being pointed in the direction of the bait

between each draw for about three seconds, the line at the same time being gathered in by the left hand. This gives time for the bait to dart downwards again between each draw. A gorge-bait, when cast out thus, should be worked much slower than a spinning bait.

With regard to the depth at which to fish, and the most likely places to find pike at various seasons of the year, the reader should consult Chapter I., where he will find such matters gone into at considerable length.

If the angler is fishing with snap trolling tackle (see Fig. 50), he will, of course, strike immediately on feeling that a pike has seized the bait. But if he is using gorge-tackle, he must act very differently. In the first place, he should hold the line very lightly in the left hand, and be ready both to release it and to lower the rod-point on feeling the slightest pull from a pike. Often and often do trollers mistake the catching of a weed for the run of a pike, and, after having patiently waited the usual five to ten minutes, strike, only to find out their mistake. Sometimes pike seize a bait very gently, and rest with it in their mouths for a few seconds; at others they dash off with it at a great speed, making the reel spin again. If they experience the slightest check, they of course find out the deception, and leave the bait. On this account, it is as well to have no check on the reel, except when the fish is being played. With a movable check this is easily managed. In the usual way, a pike darts out from his haunt, seizes the bait across the middle, and the troller feels two tugs at the line. The pike then moves slowly off, stopping occasionally, perhaps, to give the bait a shake, until he has run out 5yds. to 10yds. of line. He is then at home, and leisurely proceeds to turn the bait, and swallow it, head foremost. At the end of five minutes from the time that he ceased running he will probably have gorged, and commence to move off on the war-path again. Then strike. If you like, to make matters more sure, wait ten minutes instead of five. After striking, get him out of the weeds as best you can. A gaff with a long, stiff handle, is at times very useful.

It occasionally happens that the angler has a run, the bait is gorged, and yet the pike is not hooked. The reason for this is in the hooks lying too close to the bait's gills. Sometimes pike take the bait, hold it a few seconds, and then leave it. They may feel the lead in the bait, or may be gorged with food. When quite a lad, I was trolling in the Thames, near Pangbourne, and had a very curious experience. A pike seized the bait. I gave him about eight minutes, and struck. I felt the pike, but the bait came home. Clearly he had not gorged. A fresh bait was put up, and cast in the same place. Again it was seized, and again not gorged. A third time I cast the bait before the pike, and this time he did not seize it while it was in the water; but as I brought it a few inches above the surface, he sprang out of the water, took it, and descended to the bottom like lightning. After waiting some time to let him gorge, if he would, I looked over the nose of the boat, and found I could see right down to the bottom. A lad with me then pushed the boat forward, and, with great care, we worked along, the line being our guide, until we came over the pike, which I could see quite plainly lying close to the bottom, with the bait just as he had seized it—across his jaws. Obviously it was no use to strike, so I lowered the gaff very quietly until the point was just under his snout, and—— but I blush to tell the rest. It would be an interesting subject for debate at a meeting of an angling club whether that pike was caught by fair means or foul.

On this question of gorging, an interesting experiment made by Jesse is worth relating. He threw five roach, each about 4in. in length, to a 5lb. pike. The first four were swallowed rapidly, but the fifth was retained in the pike's mouth for half an hour, until the others digested. This incident may serve to explain the behaviour of my peculiar pike.

Finally, as to gorge-baiting, let me say that it should never be allowed on waters where pike are preserved, unless there are so many weeds that no other method can be conveniently followed.

Fly-fishing for Pike.—Pike-flies are not often used in England—in fact, the Shannon is the only place I know of where pike of respectable dimensions are so taken to any considerable extent. On Lough Derg, an expansion of the Shannon, they are frequently worked with an otter-board—a poaching instrument worked in the water the same way that a kite is in the air; but I see no reason why they should not be cast. In Lough Derg, on hot days, when the pike lay near the surface, I have known them take a fly well, even where the water was very deep. An old Irish fisherman



FIG. 51. PIKE-FLY.

of Banagher told me that a fly made out of the tail of a brown calf was very killing, and that he had taken many fish on such a one in a weedy backwater of the Shannon. Only the tip of the tail is used. It no doubt represents a rat. Pike probably take the usual pike-fly (see Fig. 51) for a bird. They are certainly not in the habit of rising to natural flies, though, as a matter of fact, I did once take a small jack on a moderate-sized lake-trout fly.

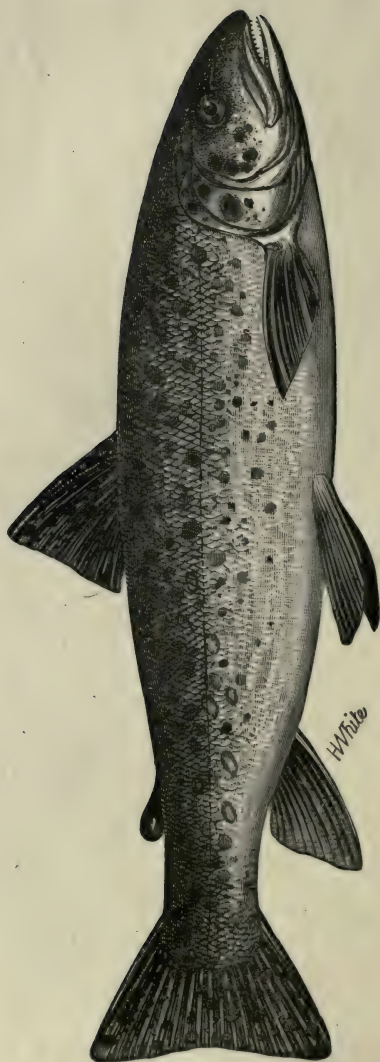
This short notice of fly-fishing brings to an end all that, I take it, need be written on the subject of pike-fishing as at present understood. Some twenty or thirty years hence—if there are any pike left—more killing methods will possibly have

been invented than are used by anglers of the nineteenth century; but I incline to the opinion that, even up to the present, pike, as compared with other fish, have received more than their share of attention from those anglers who are blessed—a pike might say cursed—with an inventive genius.



DIVISION III.

ANGLING FOR GAME FISH.



Angling for Game Fish.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Game Fish of Great Britain—Popularity of Fly-Fishing—Peculiarities of Salmon and Trout, &c.—Simple Method of Trout-breeding, &c., &c.



ROADLY speaking, all fish which afford sport to the angler are game fish, but the leading members of the family of which the salmon is the head are certainly the game fish *par excellence*. It is of these fish—salmon, trout, and grayling—that I now propose to treat. A short account of char and char-fishing is also included,

though I am afraid that delicious fish is not angled for to any considerable extent. At the same time, it must be admitted that char of any size are, when hooked—the difficulty is to hook them—as gamesome as the most exacting fly-fisher could reasonably wish. Moreover, they closely resemble trout in appearance, and are excellent eating. For these reasons, and as a matter of convenience, I have classed them with salmon, trout, and grayling.*

There are certain members of the salmon family found in

* "I shall restrict my remarks to what may be termed the 'game fishes' of this family found in the fresh waters of the British Isles, and which include the salmon, various forms of trout and char, and also the grayling" (Dr. Francis Day, in "British and Irish Salmonidæ").

fresh water besides those mentioned. As they cannot be termed game fish by any stretch of imagination, I have referred to them when writing of "Angling for Coarse Fish," in the chapter on fish not commonly caught by the fresh-water angler. I am speaking, of course, of vendace, powan, pollan, and gwyniad. There are also several sea-fish—*e.g.*, the smelt—which, so naturalists say, can claim kinship with the salmon.

All these fish, however much they may otherwise differ in appearance, have one great distinguishing mark—a small fleshy lump on the back near the tail, which is termed the adipose or fatty fin. Its shape and position will be seen at a glance in the engraving of a Loch Leven trout at the commencement of this chapter.

Salmon, trout, and grayling, are mostly angled for with artificial flies. I must confess, however, that the arrangements of fur, feather, and tinsel, used in salmon-fishing, and occasionally for trout, have no resemblance to any known insect which wings its way through space. Probably they are termed flies by courtesy, and out of respect to the feelings of those anglers who so loudly assert that they will be *fly*-fishers or nothing. Heaven only knows what salmon take these artificial baits for—something alive, something eatable—so much, I *think*, I may safely assert. My own opinion (very few anglers agree on this subject) is that many of them are taken for the fry of salt-water fish and other marine animals. Anyone who has seen a trawl lifted will probably have noticed among its contents numbers of small fish and other creatures which, when wet, are gorgeously coloured with all the hues of the rainbow. Certain salmon-flies are by no means bad representations of these beautiful creatures, both in colour and shape; and others resemble small marine animals of various species. We do know that, when in the sea, the salmon feeds on small fish, among other things; and, though he probably eats but little in fresh water, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he would as soon take a small sea fish as anything else. As a matter of fact, a salt-water animal—the prawn—is often a more deadly bait in fresh water than

any artificial fly or spinning bait made. I may here remark, that the practice of fishing with the prawn, or minnow, except under special circumstances, is not favoured by fly-fishers.

Fly-fishing is deservedly popular; the reasons are not far to seek. To begin with, this branch of our sport affords us active exercise amidst the most beautiful scenery our islands can boast—sometimes pastoral and peaceful, at others wild and majestic. Then, the fish caught are the most game and sportive of any found in the United Kingdom, and their capture involves much skill, combined often with a knowledge of insect life and the habits of fish. Moreover, no noisome baits or ground baits are required, and the fish, when cooked, provide us with agreeable food. Men who take to fly-fishing rarely give it up as long as they have strength to wield a rod.

Peculiarities of Salmon and Trout.—Salmon are born in fresh water, but pass a portion of their lives in the sea, only running up rivers, so far as we know at present, for the purpose of depositing their eggs and increasing their species. The majority of mature salmon ascend the rivers in the spring (about 90 per cent. of these spring fish are females); but some are running up all through the summer and autumn, provided there is any water. The immature, unspawned, or maiden salmon, termed grilse in England and Scotland, and peal in Ireland, ascend the rivers mostly in the autumn.* Spawning takes place in the winter. At the end of about 100 days† after the eggs are deposited there comes from the salmon-egg the alevin—a tiny fish, with a yolk-sac about the size of a pea attached to its stomach, the contents of which nourish it for several weeks. The little creature then begins to feed, and in a few months grows into the par, or samlet, a fish

* There are no fixed rules respecting the times of migration of salmon and grilse up rivers. In many rivers there is a run of salmon in the spring and grilse in the autumn, but all through the season fish seem to be running up, whenever there is a rise of water in the rivers. The habits of salmon differ materially in different rivers, and in the same river they sometimes vary in the course of years. The latest information on this and other subjects connected with the natural history of the *Salmonidæ* will be found in Dr. Day's "British and Irish Salmonidæ." There is an interesting chapter on the subject in Dr. Hamilton's "Recollections of Fly-fishing for Salmon, Trout, and Grayling."

† The period of incubation varies according to the temperature of the water. At 45 deg. the period is 90 days; at 41 deg., 97 days; at 36 deg., 114 days.

about the size of a small burn-trout, and with much the same markings.* At the end of some months the trout markings disappear, and our young salmon develops into a silvery fish, called a smolt, which descends to the sea—sometimes in spring, sometimes in autumn—to return as grilse, at the end of from two months to a year, or even more, enormously increased in size,† weighing, perhaps, as much as 10lb., but more often 5lb. or 6lb. While on their journey up stream they feed but little. That they do feed is beyond argument, for they not only rise to the angler's fly, but also take worms and spinning baits. During the period before spawning, passed in fresh water, the male fish develops a hook at the end of his lower jaw, the principal use of which seems to be to wound other males when fighting for a mate. This hook disappears when the spent fish returns to the sea; but whether it falls off, or is absorbed, is uncertain. It is termed the beak, gib, or kip—hence the term “kipper.” Shortly before spawning-time the male salmon loses his silvery appearance, and becomes more or less red. He is then known as a red fish.

After spawning, our grilse or peal, or salmon, as the case may be, are termed spent fish or kelts. They are now lank,

* As it is against the law to take samlets, and as they abound in many trout-streams, and much resemble small trout, it may be useful to quote from Dr. Day's work the points of difference between samlets and trout: “In small salmon-par the superior maxillary jawbone extends to below the pupil of the eye—mostly to below its centre. In the young brown trout it generally reaches to a level of the hind edge of the eye. But to these general rules there are many exceptional cases. The foregoing general rule as regards salmon-par sometimes holds good in smolts, but more generally does not do so. The pectoral, or breast-fin, is larger in the salmon-par than in the young trout. The adipose, or dead fin, is almost invariably tipped with orange in the brook-trout, but rarely so in the salmon-par. The scales in the hind portion of the body are larger in the salmon than in the trout, being from eleven to twelve rows, in a line from the hind edge of the dead fin, downwards and forwards to the lateral line in the true salmon, and in more regular, horizontal rows than seen in the trout, in which latter species there are fourteen or fifteen rows where a salmon has only eleven or twelve.” I may add to this, that the scales of the samlet are much easier displaced than the scales of the brook-trout. Even with this account of their differences before him, I am afraid the unscientific angler will sometimes have considerable difficulty in naming his small capture. Of course, when in doubt, the thing to do is to return the fish. The latest experiments at Howietoun have proved conclusively that up to, at any rate, eighteen months of age, there is no difference in appearance between the young of brown trout and the young of sea trout.

† Certain of the smolts (bred at Stormontfield) turned into the Tay on 29th May, 1854, returned *within two months* weighing from 5lb. to 9½lb. † When turned in they weighed less than 1lb.

ravenous things, and in their feeding-habits and play when hooked much resemble pike. In due course they return to the sea, where, owing to the abundance of food at their disposal, they quickly regain their good looks—form well rounded, sides silvery, and back a steely blue—and at the end of a period varying from a few months to perhaps as much as two years, return to the rivers mature salmon—and history repeats itself. Sometimes they recover their condition while still in the river, and then are termed “well-mended kelts.”

The Varieties of Trout may be broadly divided into two great classes—those which resemble salmon in their habits, and are known as sea-trout, and those which live habitually in fresh water. Dr. Day has, I believe, come to the conclusion that there is only one species of trout, and that the differences in appearance between trout taken from various waters are owing simply to local conditions. Sea-trout may be either brown trout which have acquired migratory habits, or—which seems more probable to me—brown trout are sea-trout which have lost the migratory habit.

It is the tendency of all trout whose dietary principally consists of fish (*e.g.*, Thames trout) to become silvery; and, on the other hand, sea-trout which have been a considerable length of time in fresh water—as may be presumed when they are found any great distance from the sea—usually lose their silvery dress, and approach fresh-water trout very nearly in their colourings and markings.

In this book I have divided the fish according to the manner in which they are caught. In the first place, we have chalk-stream trout—fat, lazy, but shy fish, which feed principally on flies, or the larvæ of flies, and are found mostly in the chalk streams of the Southern counties of England.

Next I have placed moorland or mountain trout. These are found in the rocky brooks and rivers of Devonshire, Derbyshire, and Wales, in the moorland streams of the North-country, in most parts of Ireland, and in the wilder parts of Scotland. These little fish—they are remarkable more for numbers than weight—do not get food enough to attain to any great size.

Then there are trout which dwell in lakes. Of these there

are several varieties. Some lakes swarm with under-sized, ill-conditioned, half-fed little fish, so hungry that it is almost dangerous to wade among them; while in other and larger sheets of water the trout run large, and are sometimes the finest specimens of their race. Besides these varieties, there are found, in a limited number of lakes, ferox and gillaroo, of which some account is given in Chapter IV.

Sea-trout I have already formally introduced. I will only say that to fish for sea-trout is to fish for salmon on a small scale—that the methods are similar, but reduced. Flies, lines, hooks, and rod—all are smaller; but the fish, for their size, are gamier than salmon, and more numerous.

The Thames trout is, so to speak, the great lake-trout of rivers. Being plentifully supplied with fish-food, he is great in the matter of size and condition, and usually scorns a fly, unless it is one of the large feather and tinsel arrangements, yeapte salmon-flies, or he himself is young and of an age to appreciate trout-flies. He is a silvery fish, by reason of his fish diet—one of the two things which help to silver a fish, the other being a sojourn in the sea.

The grayling is a different species to the salmon or trout, though a member of the same important family. He spawns in spring—whereas salmon and trout spawn in autumn and winter—and is in best condition when trout are almost at their worst. I will point out his peculiarities in Chapter VII.

The char is chiefly remarkable for his scarceness. He is a lake fish, and does not afford much sport to the angler. In appearance he much resembles trout, but whether of the same species as the trout is an open question. Of the char and grayling more anon. The following is a

List of Local Names given to salmon and sea-trout at the various stages of their existence; it should prove at times very useful to those anglers who seek their sport in “fresh fields and pastures new.”

SALMON.

PUG—A third-year salmon. SIMEN = Salmon (Northumberland). PAR, OR PARR—Stage between fry and smolt. SAMLET,

SALMON PAR, PINK, SMELT, and SALMON-FRY—Same as par. SPRAG, OR SALMONSPRING—Same as par (Northumberland). BRANDLING, FINGERLING, BLACK FIN, BLUE FIN, SHED, SKEGGER, GRAVELLING, HEPPER, LASPRING, and GRAVEL LASPRING—Same as par. SPERLING, OR SPARLING—Same as par (Wales). SPAWN—Same as par (Dart). MOOR-GED and MORGATE—Same as par (Somersetshire). STREAMER—Same as par (Tamar). GRAVELING—Same as par (South Scotland). SMOLT—The second stage, before migration to the sea. SPRODS—Same as smolts; sometimes applied to sea-trout. MORT—Smolts and sea-trout (Cumberland). GRILSE—Male or female salmon on first return from the sea (England and Scotland). PEAL, OR PEEL—Same as grilse (Ireland). BOTCHER—Same as grilse (Severn). FORK TAILS—Grilse. RED FISH—Male salmon shortly before spawning. SUMMER COCK, GIB-FISH—A spawning male (Northumberland). BAGGIT—Female after spawning, or (sometimes) just before. GERLING, GILLION, OR GILLING—On second return from the sea (Severn). KELT—Male or female after spawning. MENDED KELT—Kelt partly recovered condition after spawning. SPENT FISH, SLAT—Same as kelt. SHEDDER—Female after spawning. MACKS, SHRAGS—Same as shedder (Inverness). MOFFAT MEN—Kelts (Tay). JUDY—A kelt (Kerry). LAUREL—A well-mended kelt—i.e., one that has recovered a good deal from effects of spawning (Severn). KIPPER—A fish too much out of condition to be otherwise treated than by kippering.

SEA-TROUT.

SALMON-TROUT—Same as sea-trout. SALMON-PEAL—Sea-trout (Devon and Cornwall). WHITE TROUT—Sea-trout (Ireland). SEWIN—Sea-trout (Wales). TRUFF—Sea-trout (Devon). SCURF, SCURVE, SALMON-SCURF, OR COCHIVIE—Sea-trout (Tees). ROUND-TAIL—Sea-trout (Annan). FORD-WICH TROUT—Sea-trout (Kent, Stour). LAMMAS-MEN—Sea-trout in August (Scotland). BULL-TROUT—A variety of sea-trout found principally in Coquet and Tweed. GREY SALMON—Same as bull-trout (Tweed). MUSSELBURGH TROUT—Bull-trout (Edinburgh and Dalkeith). PHINOC, OR FINNOCK—Sea-

trout in grilse stage (Scotland). HERLING—Sea-trout in grilse stage (North-country and South of Scotland). WHITLING, or WHITINGS—Sea-trout in grilse stage (North-country). MORT—Grilse stage of sea-trout (Cumberland). SPROD—Smolt stage (sometimes grilse stage also) of sea-trout (Cumberland). YELLOW FINS, ORANGE FINS, BLACK TAILS, SILVER-WHITES, SILVER-GREYS, BURN TAILS—Par stage of sea-trout (North-country and Scotland). SMELT SPRODS, HERRING SPRODS—Par stage of sea-trout (Cumberland). CANDLEMAS-GREY—Kelt of sea-trout (Lake-country).

Unless the majority of anglers interest themselves in fish-culture, there will soon be no sport worth having. In a footnote* is an account of the various processes necessary in

* When the trout are seen on the shallows, in October and November, they are netted in small-meshed nets. Those from which the ova or milt run easily (ripe fish) are placed in a tub of water, and the unripe remainder returned, or left in a store, or floating stew, to mature. From the males a milky liquid will flow at almost the slightest handling, while from the females a touch will cause the appearance of a few eggs the size of small peas. To spawn the female, hold her tail in your left hand, head in the right hand; raise the head, and, holding the vent of the fish over a milk-plate (or soup-plate, or the basin used for baked milky puddings, if only one or two small fish are to be spawned), bend the tail back a little, causing the skin on the belly to tighten, and the eggs will flow out. If the eggs do not flow freely, or any are left (which will be probable), pass the right hand downwards over the belly, using little pressure until past the vitals. Next, *quickly* take a male fish, hold the abdomen against the eggs, and gently press with thumb and forefinger above and just behind the pectoral fins. Have a towel in front of you during these operations, and lay the fish on it when not handling them; and if you cannot both hold and spawn the fish yourself, let an assistant hold the fish for you; and, in any case, wear a woollen or cloth glove on the left hand.

But to return to the eggs. After the ova are milted, add a tumbler of water, and gently stir the eggs and milt together. The eggs will shortly stick to the plate, and together. Do not remove them until they have separated, which will be in from half to three-quarters of an hour, or a little more. Next put the plate under a jet of water, and let the water overflow, and carry with it the effete milt. The eggs are now ready to be laid down, and all that is required is a constant flow of *unpolluted water*, about 3in. in depth. Any dead eggs must be picked out every morning, and there must be nothing in the material of which the troughs are made (if the eggs are placed in troughs) which will poison the water, or bear any fungoid growth likely to be communicated to the fish. The eggs may be placed in a long, wooden trough (if wood is used, it must be charred), out of which the water passes at one end through a very fine screen; or they may be laid down on gravel in a brook or backwater, of course being carefully guarded from water-birds and other enemies; or they may be placed in an artificial redd, such as I have described on page 10. No two eggs should touch one another; any crowding should be avoided, and if possible, *they should be kept in the dark*. The current which passes over them should be gentle, or it may wash the eggs away; but the *slower the stream, the shallower must be the water*. Trout-eggs can easily be hatched out in a town house with waterworks water—easier, indeed, than in the country, where sometimes the sediment in the water is a constant source of trouble and loss. If the eggs get covered with sediment, the water in the trough must be watered night and morning with a watering-can and the stream through the trough increased. The best thing to do with the fry is to place them, at the end of three weeks, in a pond in which there is plenty of food (first clearing it of other fish), when they will feed themselves, and grow rapidly or slowly according to the food-

trout-breeding as it is carried on by professional fish-breeders; but I wish more particularly to tell of a way by which 15,000 trout-fry or more may be produced at a very moderate expenditure of time, trouble, and money. When trout-eggs are within a week or so of hatching they are called eyed ova, the eyes of the embryo fish being distinctly visible through the shell of the egg. Eyed ova are supplied by all the fish-culturists, at prices varying from £7 10s. per box of 15,000 to 30s. the thousand.* To hatch the eggs they may be placed on a gravelly shallow in the brook or stream, in a foot of water or less, and covered with a piece of fine wire-netting. They should be ordered to be sent just on the point of hatching, so that they hatch out in a couple of days. The fry will look after themselves. Floods are a standing danger to this plan. Fry, unless bred in enormous quantities, are very little use in rivers which either already contain trout, or other feeders on fish, such as pike, perch, and chub.

A stream, however small, which runs into a pond, affords every convenience for hatching out the ova and rearing fry. The pond should be cleared of other fish, and the outlet carefully guarded with very fine perforated zinc, to prevent the escape of the fry. Some slight preparation is advisable in the stream. The simplest thing to do is merely to lay the eyed ova on a suitable shallow (*i.e.*, where the water is 4in. to 8in. in depth, and flows gently), cover it with fine-meshed wire-netting, fixed a few inches above the surface of the water, and leave it. It is advisable to cover over the whole of the

supply. If the natural food-supply is not equal to the wants of the fry, a certain number of the little fish are bound to die. The fry at Howietoun are fed on a paste (made in worm-like form by being squeezed through perforated zinc) consisting of fillet or sirloin (no fat) of beef or horse, pounded, and intimately mixed with the yolks of hard-boiled eggs (nine to each 1lb.), and passed through a wire sieve (see "The History of Howietoun," by Sir James Maitland, Bart.). In Mr. Andrews' fishponds, at Guildford, there is sufficient natural food, and the fry do not require feeding.

* The following is, I believe, a complete list of professional fish-culturists; it may be found useful. Eggs can be sent any distance (only buy those which are guaranteed to have been taken from large fish); but the shorter the distance trout of any size have to travel, the better. *South of England*: Thos. Andrews, Guildford; Davis, High Wycombe, Bucks; Capel (gillaroo, &c.), Fooks Cray, Kent; Trent Fish Culture Company, Milton, Burton-on-Trent. *Midland Counties*: Burgess, Malvern Wells. *Eastern Counties*: Ford (coarse fish as well as trout), Caistor, Lincolnshire; Lieut. Colonel Custance, Norwich. *Scotland*: Armistead, Solway Fisheries, Dumfries; Sir J. R. G. Maitland, Bart., Howietoun Fishery (J. R. Guy, Secretary), Stirling.

brook, from your redd to the pond, with netting, to save the fry from kingfishers, herons, &c.

But all streams are subject to floods, and the safest way to deal with the ova is to prepare a trench for them by the side of, and fed by the water from, the stream. No more water than can pass through the pipe which feeds the trench can then find its way to the eggs. The ground-plan of a stream, pond, and redd (Fig. 1) will show my meaning very clearly. The inlet

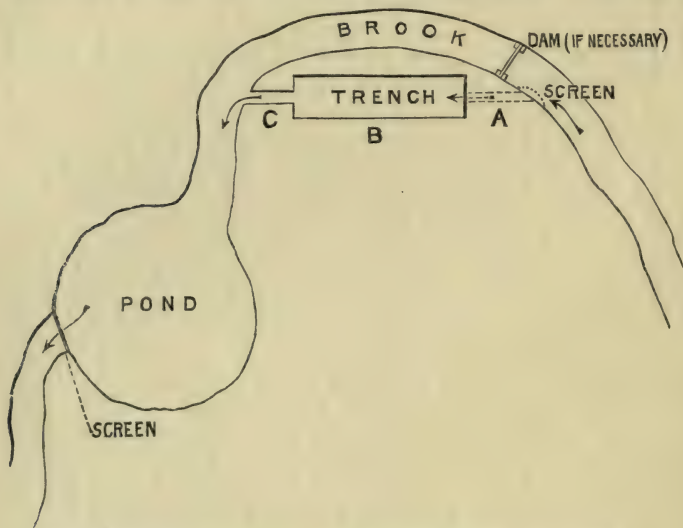


FIG. 1. SIMPLE ARRANGEMENT FOR TROUT-BREEDING (Ground Plan).

pipe (A) may be made of common red, 3in. drain-pipes. The trench (B)* can be lined with large half drain-pipes. The outlet (C) should be about 6in. wide, and open to the air. The bottom of the trench, or redd, should be covered with 3in. of clean stones about the size of cob-nuts, among which the fry can hide themselves when first hatched. Put no screen or obstruction in the channel (C), but allow the fry to pass down to the

* Allow 2 square feet for each 1000 eggs. For 15,000 eggs the dimensions of redd may be 2ft. in width by 15ft. in length; or, better, 1ft. by 30ft.

brook, and from the brook to the pond, just when they think fit. A large piece of perforated zinc should be placed in the brook, at the mouth of the inlet (A), to prevent the entrance of fish, rats, or rubbish; and if there is not sufficient fall in the brook to cause the water to flow through the redd, a small dam may be required across the brook below A.

This arrangement can be made by any labouring man for something under £2; but, of course, where expense is no object, a considerable amount of money may be spent in brickwork, settling-pond, filter, &c. Fig. 2 shows the trench, inlet, and

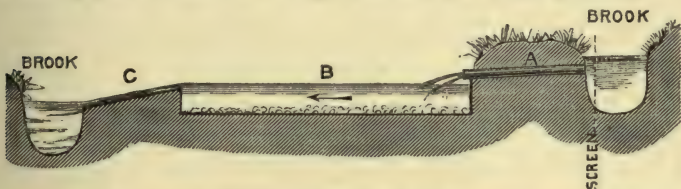


FIG. 2. SIMPLE ARRANGEMENT FOR TROUT BREEDING (Section).

outlet, in section. With lakes and large rivers already containing trout or other depredatory fish, unless trout of $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. or upwards can be purchased and turned in—a costly proceeding—the best plan is to thoroughly stock the small tributary streams; Loch Leven has been so stocked with great success. Ninety per cent. or more of the fry placed in rivers containing numerous trout, pike, perch, &c., get eaten up. Besides putting in fish, great attention should be paid to making the stream suitable for trout, increasing the food-supply, &c.—a branch of the subject which I have not space to deal with.

“Stocking,” a pamphlet published at the Howietoun Fishery, Stirling; Livingstone Stone’s “Domesticated Trout,” published by Sampson Low, Marston, & Co.; and the “History of Howietoun,” by Sir James Maitland, are useful works on trout-culture.

CHAPTER II.

CHALK-STREAM TROUT.

*Habits and Haunts—Rod and Tackle for Dry-fly Fishing—
Eyed Hooks and Knots—Flies with Divided Wings—Casting
the Fly—Playing the Fish—Fishing with the Floating Fly
—The May-fly Season—Fishing with the Sunk or Wet Fly—
—Blow-line Fishing—Minnow and Worm Fishing.*



UNDER the term “chalk-stream” trout I find myself obliged to include all trout dwelling in slow-flowing rivers, almost or quite untenanted by coarse fish, for in nearly all such streams, whether traversing a chalk district or not, the methods by which the fish may be taken are almost identical.

The two principal chalk streams in the South of England are the Test and the Itchen; and there are many minor streams well stocked with fish. These rivers wind through pastoral country, are dammed up at intervals by mills, are nearly always crystal-clear, and contain abundance of food for the trout. They are, for the most part, well preserved. Jack and other coarse fish are netted out. In streams which abound in coarse fish, such as the Thames, and some portions of the Kennet and Colne, trout never rise well to a fly except (on the two last-mentioned streams) during the annual rise of the May-fly.

Generally speaking, the characteristics of chalk-stream trout are their size, the careful and deliberate way in which they rise to a fly, and (particularly in club or semi-public waters) their caution. They spawn about mid-winter, then retire for a while to quiet water. About April, or later, they begin to get into fair condition, and fly-fishing commences. A trout, when a little out of condition, is lean and hungry, and it follows that the best fishing (but not the best-conditioned fish) is often had in the early spring, particularly if the weather is mild. In summer, unless the weather is showery, there is little fishing until about dusk; but in September, if the weather is genial, the fish begin to rise in the daytime. September is often a very good fishing month.

The Haunts of Trout in Hampshire rivers are not so difficult or so necessary to describe as in the more turbulent streams of the mountain and moor, for, as a general rule, anglers only cast where they see rising fish.

In well-stocked chalk streams the trout, when feeding, seem everywhere. You find them in deep water and shallow, under the banks and in the open, in mill-heads and mill-tails. When not feeding, they lie like stones on the bottom, or under overhanging banks or masses of weeds. At such times sport is not promising, and the only thing to do is to fish the shallows, where, even if the trout do lie close to the bottom, the fly can be brought within their range of vision. In the evening a large number of fish come on to the shallows to feed; but very big fish which live in the deeps merely rise to the surface, and take only those flies which come close to them.

In the evening, also, fish which dwell in pools drop down to the scours to feed. In the early part of the day they will be found more towards the centre of the pool, and particularly in the eddy at each side of the stream.

Generally speaking, the most favourite haunts of trout are: close to sedge-lined banks, where the water is deep; swirling pools, below masses of weeds; anywhere in shallows over 12in. in depth, provided there are here and there patches of weeds or other cover for fish; under trees or bushes which overhang

the water; by the sides of reed-beds; and, in fact, close to, under, or just below anything which affords them shelter from the eyes of man and from the sun.

The Rod for Dry-fly Fishing need not, so far as I can see, vary materially from the rod used for wet-fly fishing. It should be rather stiff and powerful, and either of split cane or greenheart. Some anglers like long rods for dry-fly fishing; but the majority of Hampshire fishermen use rods varying from 9ft. 6in. to 11ft. in length. Above all things, let the length of the rod depend on your strength. The actual weight of the rod is not of the first importance; in fact, by adding to

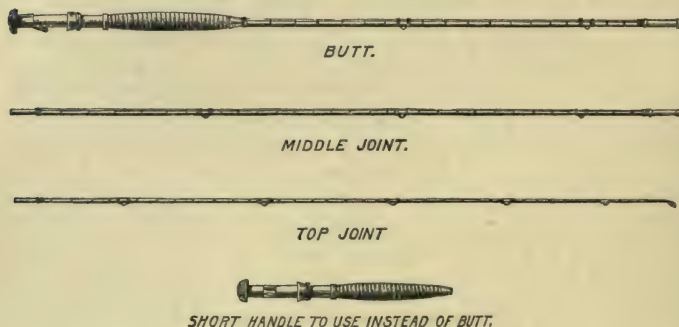


FIG. 3. THE AUTHOR'S FLY-ROD.

the weight of some rods—at the butt—they at once feel lighter, being thereby better balanced. Rods are made in two, three, or four pieces. Those in two pieces cast the best, but they are, from their length, a little inconvenient to carry about.

Happening to require a new fly-rod some time ago, I put a firm of tackle-makers* to no little trouble to work out certain ideas I had on the subject. After two rods had been made which, while being far from failures, did not exactly embody all my views, the rod was built which is engraved in Fig. 3. It is in three joints, each about 4ft. long, making in all a

* Messrs. Warner & Sons, of Redditch.

powerful 11ft. 10in. rod. When I require a shorter rod, I replace the butt by the short handle, A (1ft. 6in.), which gives me a stiff, springy little 9ft. 4in. rod, possessing extraordinary casting power. I candidly do not believe a better rod, or one more generally useful, could possibly be made. The 9ft. 6in. rod gives me perfect control over any fish up to 3lb., and enables me to get out 20yds. of line properly and without much effort. That is saying a good deal for a rod so short as this.* Of course a great deal depends on the line, a subject to which I will refer presently. The great objection to a short rod is that the line is apt to catch in things behind the angler, especially when the wind is blowing from the rod to the point at which the fly is aimed. But if the steeple cast (see page 33) is adopted, this rarely happens.

Split cane rods, if honestly and well made, and taken proper care of, will last many years. *They should be re-varnished once a year.* Information concerning their manufacture is useless to anglers, whose only safeguard is to go to one of the few good houses for these rods. Greenheart rods, if properly made of well-seasoned wood, are nearly as good as split cane rods, and one-third the price.

In fishing for chalk-stream trout, the most accurate casting is requisite; accurate casting against or along the wind, requires a heavy line (tapered fine, of course, near the gut cast); and a heavy line requires a powerful rod. The weak, whippy things still found in many tackle-shops are only fit to play fingerlings on. While the rod should be rather stiff, it must not be thick and clumsy. The best greenheart rods are built somewhat on the lines of the Castle-Connell rods—very thin just above the handle, with little taper until within 2ft. or 3ft. of the point. If a rod is thin, and yet stiff, with a good springy action like steel, you may be almost certain that the wood is of good quality and well seasoned. Rods with very slender top joints are almost useless for dry-fly fishing, as without a certain amount of weight towards the top the line cannot be picked off the water.

* The makers intend to copy the rod in greenheart. Another first-rate rod is described in Chapter III.

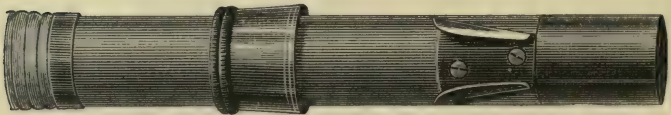
Rod Fittings are of secondary importance; but anglers should, nevertheless, insist on having the best that can be made, the best costing only a fraction more than the worst. Those on my rod (Fig. 4) are, of course, the ones I believe



Snake-shaped Rod Ring.



"Bickerdyke" Rod-top Ring.



Winch Fitting on the Weeger Principle.

FIG. 4. ROD FITTINGS.

to be the best. The well-known Weeger winch fitting holds any-sized reel, and neither sticks nor hurts the hand. The snake rings (if they may be termed rings) allow the line to pass through them with less friction than any others made, and—which is still more important—never get foul of the line, as do the ordinary upright rings. I hope, in the course of a year or two, to see these rings used on rods of every kind and description, for they are not only the best, but also the cheapest.

The Top Ring is an invention of my own, which, so far as I have heard, has met with the approval of all anglers who have *used* it. It works on pivots, and by adapting itself to any angle made by the line with the rod, reduces friction, and saves wear and tear to both rod and line, especially to the latter. Moreover, these top rings prevent fouling of the line, for on the line getting twisted round the top of the rod, as it sometimes will, the ring goes flat with the rod, and the line, on being jerked, slips off. These rings are made by the makers of the rod already described. With this top ring and the snake rings a considerable amount of line can be thrown off at the end of the cast (*i.e.*, let out through the rings, the cast

being lengthened to that extent)—more than with any other rings at present made. I have used these top rings on all my rods for about three years, and never had one break or get out of working order.

Ferrules can be and are made which, being accurately fitted, hold together very tightly by mere force of suction, never allowing a joint to throw out. I cannot help asking what more is required.* My rod is fitted with these ferrules, and nothing can answer better. Of course, these suction ferrules, like anything else, can be made badly, in which case they will not answer. All ferrules, both male and female, should have a small rim of metal round the top edge. This doubles the strength at the weakest points. Never buy a rod which has the ferrules countersunk—i.e., let in level with the wood.

I must not forget to mention the flexible ferrule invented by Mr. Kirker, of Belfast (see Fig. 5). I tried a two-joint rod fitted with one of these ferrules for a month. The ferrule, undoubtedly, was flexible, and in every respect answered its purpose. One fault only I found with it: the joints twisted occasionally; but it was impossible for them to throw out.



FIG. 5. FLEXIBLE FERRULE.

* Mr. Henry B. Wells wrote in the *Fishing Gazette* that our English ferrules are too long, that dowels are not required, and that the proper measurements are :

Bore.	Entire length.	On wood.	For entering ferrule.
in.	in.	in.	in.
$\frac{1}{4}$	$3\frac{1}{2}$	2	$1\frac{1}{2}$
$\frac{1}{2}$	3	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$
$\frac{3}{4}$	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	1

"There are," he says, "many thousands of ferruled fishing-rods in use in this country (America). Of these, not one in 5000, unless of foreign make (and they are uncommon), has any device whatever to prevent the joints from throwing apart, except the fit of the ferrules—the cohesion of one ferrule within the other. Yet for a rod to throw apart here is one of the rarest accidents which the angler encounters." In "Angling for Pike," a lockfast joint, made by Farlow, is illustrated; and in "Angling for Coarse Fish," another, made by Hardy Bros.

Spliced rods (*i.e.*, made with no ferrules at all) I will refer to in the chapter on salmon.

The Care of Rods.—Rods should be re-varnished with coachmakers' varnish every year. To remove the glitter of the varnish, rub it lightly with fine sand-paper, and afterwards smooth with an oiled rag. Ferrules should be greased occasionally, or they will stick. Butter scraped off a sandwich will do if nothing better is forthcoming. If ferrules stick, try a little spirit, and, having given time for it to penetrate, warm the outside ferrule in the flame of a match, and then try what a little force will do. The warming will often do without the spirit. The partitions in rod bags should be made larger than is generally the case. A rod—particularly if made of split cane—should *never be put in a damp bag*, or against a damp wall, and should always be wiped after a wet day's fishing, and left out of the bag in a warm, dry room, so as to allow any wet which may have got into the ferrules to dry out. For the same reason, the stoppers or plugs should not be put into ferrules for some hours after a rod has been used in the rain. Never lay a rod on the grass, but stick it into the ground by means of a spike, usually screwed into the butt. Salmon-rods, and rods used from boats, are best without a spike; a nice finish for the butt of such rods is an india-rubber knob. I see that Mr. Kirker has recently patented a spike which telescopes up into the butt when not required. I have not seen one, but the idea is certainly good. If the joint of a wooden rod warps, hang it to a nail, and suspend a weight at the lower end.

The Reel, or Winch.—The cheapest really useful thing of the kind is a 2½in. or 3in. wooden Nottingham reel, fitted with a *very light* check or click (mechanism to prevent the reel running too easily) and a line-guard. Such a reel is shown in Fig. 6, and it need not cost more than 4s. or 5s. These reels, having a large barrel, wind up very quickly, and possess all the advantages of a multiplier without any of its many disadvantages. The wire line-guard shown in the illustration is a little idea of my own, which answers very well.

On somewhat the same principle is Slater's (of Newark) "Combination" Reel. Another, better in some respects, but more expensive, than the foregoing, is Warner's Brake Reel, I have been using one for some months, and it has quickly become first favourite. It has a large barrel, a very light, adjustable check, the line is properly guarded by means of bars, and, by a little brake which can be applied to the edge of the revolving portion by touching a knob with the little finger, an extra check of any degree of force that may be required can be applied.

Of metal reels, there is a good one designed by Mr. Jardine and sold by Messrs. Carter & Peek. It lets the air into the centre of the line, which is a great advantage. I have also seen a reel, designed by Mr. Moscrop, a member of the Manchester Anglers' Association, which seems a great advance on all other metal reels; it is not at present for sale—though no doubt will be next year—so it will be sufficient to say of

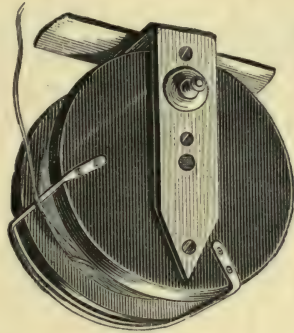


FIG. 6. NOTTINGHAM REEL WITH AUTHOR'S LINE-GUARD.

it that it is very light, contains only *one* screw, admits the air to the centre of the line, and is fitted with a check, &c. If the angler is purchasing an ordinary metal winch, the points to be attended to are these: The handle should be attached to a revolving plate, and not to a crank; the check should be *very* light, the reel should be large in diameter, the plates close together, and the reel and line should together nicely balance the rod. Winches require oiling occasionally, and wooden reels used in fly-fishing are all the better for being smeared inside with vaseline.

The Line for fly-fishing should be of plaited silk, smoothly
DIV. III. D

waterproofed with an oil dressing,* and tapered for about five yards at one or both ends. If at both ends, when one end is worn out the line can be turned. The line should be solid. Avoid lines wholly or partly of hair. No one who has fly-fished with a dressed silk line will use any other. With the powerful rods now in vogue, especially those of split cane, a very heavy line may be used. Weight insures that accurate and lengthy casting which is so necessary when fishing for a rising trout. The thick part does not go within four yards of the fish, for the line tapers down to a fine point not much thicker than the three-yard gut cast, which also tapers. The thickness or weight of the line should depend on the strength of the rod. It is no uncommon thing for a Hampshire fisherman to use a line almost as thick as an ordinary salmon line above the tapered portion. With such lines I have seen a fly dropped like a piece of thistle-down exactly in front of a rising fish certainly not less than 25yds. distant from the angler. It is very difficult to buy a well-dressed line, for those of commerce are dressed to dry quickly, and a quickly-dried line is hard, and cracks and becomes useless very soon.

Thirty-five yards of this thick line are usually sufficient. To them should be spliced 30yds. or 40yds. of a finer line. The best back lines—as they are termed—I know of, are the *twisted* silk lines used for pike by the Trent fishermen. They are very strong. The splice is effected thus: Unravel $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. of the twisted line, and scrape with a knife $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. of the plaited line. Well cobbler's-wax the ends, lay them together, and roll them between the finger and thumb. Then carefully bind them over with well-waxed silk. To finish off the silk, lay a pen-

* The following is the dressing for lines which is given in "Angling for Coarse Fish":—"The best dressing is simply raw linseed oil but it takes such a long time to dry that it is rarely used, next best is boiled linseed oil. The line is soaked for a week in the oil (cold), then stretched between two trees, well rubbed with a piece of smooth leather (this gets the air-bubbles out of the line), and then put to soak for two more days. It is then again stretched between trees, the superfluous oil wiped gently off and left to dry—the drying will take about two months. In wet weather the line should be taken indoors. When this first coat is dry, the line should be put into the oil for two more days, and again be put out to dry. The operation takes, altogether, about six months. If it is desirable to put on a fine polish, this can easily be done, when the line is dry, by well rubbing it with a piece of leather on which is a little raw linseed oil."

holder, or your finger, along the splice, take three turns of silk over it, put the end under the turns, tighten up, and pull the end through as far as it will come (Fig. 7). This finish off is useful for all kinds of bindings, and is well worth learning.

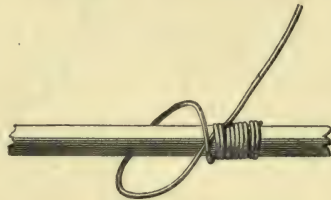


FIG. 7. FASTEN-OFF OF BINDING.

Gut, manufactured out of silkworms, should be carefully selected by the chalk-stream fly-fisher. It is sold either made up into casts, or in hanks of about 100 lengths, just as it is imported. The very finest gut has to be drawn through steel plates, and is then known as drawn gut. Drawn gut lacks strength, and quickly frays; but its use is, nevertheless, absolutely necessary on bright days, in well-fished chalk streams. My advice is never to use it if trout can be caught without it. More than one of my angling friends will never use it under any circumstances whatever.

Most anglers buy their casts ready made. If the angler buys a hank of gut 15in. long—a considerable, but not an extreme, length—he can make up casts in which the knots are at least 13in. apart. I have just received a hank of the finest undrawn Telarana gut, 15in. long, from Mr. W. Robertson, of Bothwell Street, Glasgow, at the very moderate cost of 5s., and have recently come across some Ligerio gut, sold by Mr. Cummins, of Bishop Auckland, 17½in. in length, about as fine as the Telarana gut from Glasgow, but, being longer, of course a little more expensive. Drawn gut is not necessarily so fine as the two classes I have mentioned; but it can be, and is, made considerably finer than hair. It should not be less than 16in. in length. The *finest* drawn gut will not hold a

2lb. trout. Good gut is long, round, free from specks when held up to the light, supple, transparent, and strong.

To Make a Tapered Gut Cast at least three different sizes of gut are necessary: the thickest, only a little finer than the end of the running line; the finest, as fine as you think desirable,

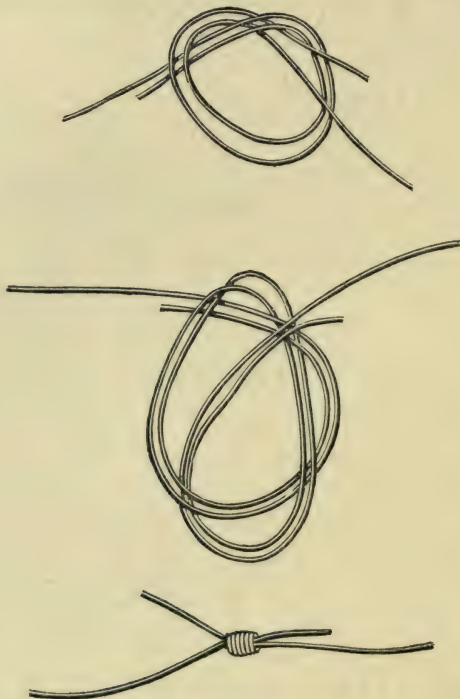


FIG. 8. A RELIABLE GUT KNOT.

next the fly; and some of an intermediate size. First stain the gut by placing it in Stephens' blue-black ink for a few minutes, and afterwards washing it in clean water; this will give it a pale neutral tint, which is not to be improved on for chalk-stream fishing. Before being knotted together, the lengths

must be soaked for at least half an hour in *cold* water (warm or hot water is injurious to gut). If you are by the river side, and are knotting gut, the ends should be well moistened in the mouth.

One of the most reliable knots for gut is shown in Fig. 8, which renders any explanation unnecessary, beyond stating that

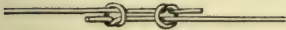


FIG. 9. COMMON GUT KNOT.

to begin the knot two ends are overlapped, tied in a single knot, and the ends put through again. The knot most commonly used is shown in Fig. 9. It is a trifle neater than the other, but utterly unreliable if the gut is very fine, or the two pieces to be joined are of different thicknesses. The thick end of the cast should terminate with a loop made as shown in Fig. 10. The usual length of a cast is 3yds., but in windy weather, for casting against the wind it may be shortened.

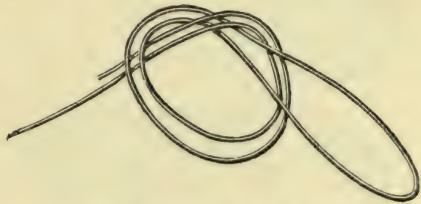


FIG. 10. KNOT FOR GUT LOOP.

The knot shown in Fig. 11 is one of the best for fastening the reel-line to the cast; but for wet-fly fishing a better plan is to have a long loop of gut spliced on to the end of the reel line, to which



FIG. 11. KNOT FOR FASTENING REEL-LINE TO CAST.

the cast may be looped. Where the line is drawn through the water, as it sometimes is when wet-fly fishing, the knots cannot be too few in number. In lieu of the gut-loop above-mentioned, some anglers splice about 2ft. of twisted gut on to the reel-line. To this the cast, which should, in consequence, be rather shorter, is looped. This plan insures a very gradual taper between the reel-line and the fly.

The portion of the cast which wears out first is the fine end,

next the fly, and dry-fly fishers usually carry what are termed points, or tips (two lengths of fine gut knotted together), which can be attached to the end of the cast, to replace the worn portion. These tips are usually carried in a round, tin box, between two layers of damp felt or Spongio Piline. They are then always wet, and ready for tying on.

Fly Boxes and Books.—Messrs. Farlow sell a very nice little fly-box for dry flies on eyed hooks, casts and tips (Fig. 12), the two last mentioned being kept damp in the manner described. Many dry-fly fishers only carry a few flies loose in a tin matchbox. I generally use a book made for me

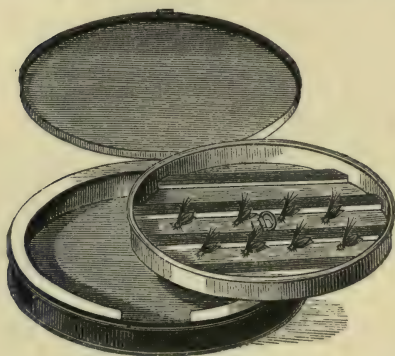


FIG. 12. BOX FOR FLIES ON EYED HOOKS, WITH DAMPING ARRANGEMENT FOR CASTS.

by Warner & Sons—an elaboration of one invented by a member of the firm, and registered. On parchment leaves are slips of very thick felt, into which flies on eyed hooks can be stuck, the thickness of the felt saving them from being crushed. Then, on other pages, are pockets for flies on gut, and there are also pockets for casts. The book slips into a leather case, and

is well suited for the all-round angler who likes to carry in one book flies suitable for any river in the United Kingdom. For small flies on gut only, there is nothing better than the "Winchester" fly-box. Any fly can be taken out from it or replaced in two or three seconds, the gut of each fly is kept moist, and a tangle is impossible.

The Landing-net is very essential in chalk streams. It should be fitted to a long, telescopic handle. There is no better way of carrying it than in a sling. By means of a knuckle-joint the net doubles over, and is kept out of the way. The one illustrated—the "Hi Regan" (Fig. 13)—which

has been patented by Warner & Sons, has a collapsing bow, the joint invention of "Hi Regan," author of that invaluable work, "How and Where to Fish in Ireland," and myself. The V-shaped nets are not suited for Southern streams, in which weeds abound.

The Creel illustrated in Fig. 14 was made for me quite recently, by the makers of the net, who have endeavoured, and, I think, with success, to carry out my ideas of what a creel ought to be. It is an improved form of a tray-basket invented by Mr. Edgar Warner some years ago, and the design has, I believe, been registered. It is light but strong, and the top, being flat, forms a comfortable seat; tackle, tobacco, and lunch, for which ample space is given, are divided from the

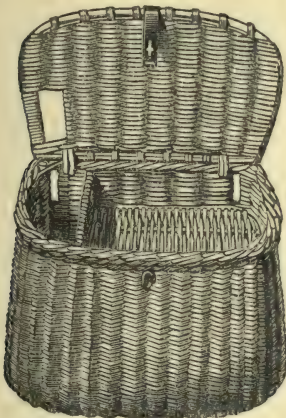


FIG. 14. THE AUTHOR'S CREEL.



FIG. 13. THE "HI REGAN" NET, WITH TELESCOPIC HANDLE, KNUCKLE-JOINT, AND SLING.

fish by the tray; the tray takes out, and allows the fish to be removed, and the basket to be thoroughly cleaned; and the hole at the side of the lid, through which the fish are placed, is more conveniently situated than if it were, as is usual, in the middle of the lid. The creel is well varnished inside as well as out. Enamel paint is a good thing for the inside—one of Mr. E. M. Tod's ideas. Some anglers like tin or wooden creels, as they keep the fish moist. Mr.

Walbran, of Station Road, Leeds, keeps a variety of these—the only ones I have ever seen. (See also Chapter III.)

Waders, so far as chalk streams are concerned, are more often useful for kneeling in long, wet grass, than for wading; for this reason, some anglers, in lieu of waders, wear waterproof knee-protectors. Waterproof knee-boots of leather or indiarubber are useful in Southern streams, as also are the long, indiarubber wading-boots; but these latter soon wear out. The remarks on waders in the chapter on salmon should be read in connection with this subject.

Hooks.—Gut is either lashed on to the hook with waxed silk, or—the end of the shank being turned into an eye for the purpose—is knotted to it. The chief advantage of eyed hooks

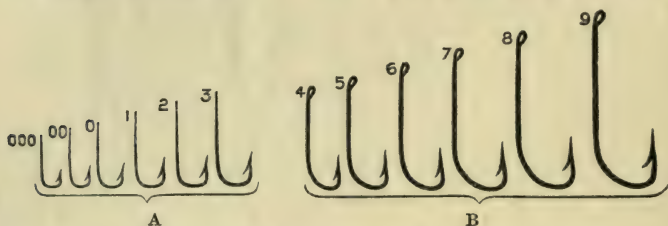


FIG. 15. A, KENDAL SNECK HOOKS FOR SMALL FLIES; B, PENNELL-LIMERICK HOOKS (EYED) FOR LARGE FLIES.

is that they enable the angler to attach gut of any thickness to his fly. Eyed hooks do not whip off so easily as flies on hooks bound to gut, and they are very economical, for as soon as a piece of gut gets at all worn near the hook, the gut can be re-tied. Mr. Halford is of the opinion that flies on eyed hooks float better than those mounted in the old-fashioned manner. There is no appreciable difference between the hooking power of hooks with or without eyes. Anglers differ considerably as to whether the eyes should bend outwards (termed “turned-up” eyes), or inwards towards the point (termed “turned-down” eyes). Theoretically, the turned-down eyes should hook best, but I am inclined to think that turned-up eyes are best for the very small sizes (000 to 3).

In the larger sizes, those with the turned-down eyes are much to be preferred.

With regard to the best bend of hooks, I prefer for small flies (000 to 3) the Kendal Sneek (A, Fig. 15). They are shown without eyes. The points of these hooks are "kerb'd"—i.e.,

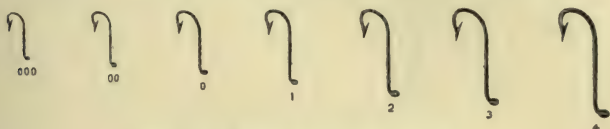


FIG. 16. HALL'S EYED-HOOK SCALE.

bent slightly sideways. This peculiarity is good in small hooks, but very bad if carried to excess. A slight twist helps the point of the hook to catch into the fish's mouth, but if more than slightly twisted, the point will not penetrate. For the larger hooks there is nothing better than some good form of Limerick, such as the Pennell-Limerick (Fig. 15, B), made by Bartleet and



FIG. 17. THE TURTLE KNOT.

Sons, of Redditch. As very many fly-fishers favour the hooks designed by Mr. H. S. Hall, I have given a scale of the Hall hooks (Fig. 16). They are now made both at Redditch and Kendal. There being considerable variations in the hook-scales of different makers, the reader should bear in mind that the

sizes of hooks quoted for *trout* flies refer to the above scales, which are numbered on the Kendal system. In the Redditch

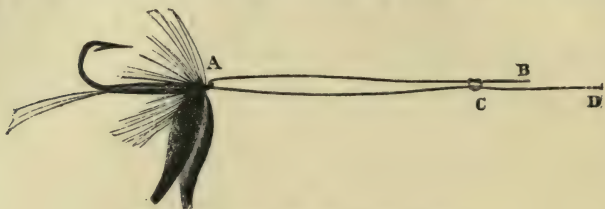


FIG. 18. HOW TO TIE THE JAM KNOT.



FIG. 19. THE JAM KNOT.

numbering the figures run the other way. The scales of different makers are apt to vary.

Knots for Eyed Hooks.—The most generally useful one is the Turle knot, which is sufficiently explained by Fig. 17; it is very safe, and very easy to tie.

If the eye of the hook is very small, and *closely fits the gut*, then, and *only* then, can the jam knot recommended by Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell be safely used. It is neat, easily made, and easily unmade. To tie it (see Fig. 18), hold the fly in the left hand, push the gut through the eye (A), in the direction of the hook-bend, leave go the fly, and with the end of B make a slip-knot (C) round the end D. Leave the slip-knot open enough to pass comfortably over the metal eye of the hook. Next, take the fly in the left



FIG. 20. KNOT FOR HOOKS WITH LARGE EYES, AND FOR LARGE FLIES.

the metal eye of the hook. Next, take the fly in the left

hand, and pull the gut end D. The knot C will then slip to the eye, and, with a little assistance, will pass over it and form itself into the jam knot (shown on a bare hook in Fig. 19). It is made in a very few seconds, and is really very simple; but I must repeat the warning that it is only safe when the eye fits the gut. It should only be used on flies, not on bare hooks. Quite $\frac{1}{2}$ in. of gut-end should be left with this knot.

Mr. Hall's hooks have rather large eyes, and it is usual to put the end of the gut through the eye, round the shank, and back through the eye again, and then tie as shown in Fig. 20. The gut is thus double just above the eye—a decided advantage; but I confess I do not like the clumsy appearance of these large eyes. It is easy to thread the gut through them, and they are therefore much liked by anglers whose sight is not good. As the gut passes twice through the eye, I generally use this kind if either the fly is large or the eye unusually large for the gut.

Floating Flies.—The chief peculiarities about flies dressed to float are in their having rather more hackle—cocks' hackles being mostly used—than is found on wet flies; and upright, divided wings, which steady the fly as it falls through the air, and cause it to drop lightly, legs first. (The hackles cause it to float—not the wings.) The fly is then said to cock—*i.e.*, the wings cock. I do not propose to give any directions for tying these flies, but merely the dressings. Fly-tying would almost necessitate a treatise by itself, and the most I have been able to do is to give in Chapter IV. some diagrams showing how the most simple fly—used for lake-fishing—may be tied. When the reader has mastered that, he can then teach himself to tie chalk-stream flies, if he likes. But he will be foolish if, in that case, he does not provide himself with Mr. Halford's "Floating Flies, and How to Dress Them," which is most exhaustive, and *the* work on the subject. My difficulty was to know what flies to omit, and I took counsel with Mr. Halford, who, after consulting with Mr. Marryat, probably the most experienced chalk-stream angler living, most kindly drew up for me the following list of the best twelve flies for Hampshire streams.

The dressings of these flies I have taken from Mr. Halford's book.*

(1) *Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear*.†—This is one of the earliest flies, and is good everywhere, and all through the season. It is akin to the Blue Dun, Blue Bloa of the North, and Blue Upright of Devonshire.

(2) *Dark Olive Dun*.‡—A very useful fly.

(3) *Iron Blue*.§—Comes on in April, May, and June, and when on, the trout will usually take nothing else.

(4) *Medium Olive Quill*.||—Useful fly from June onwards.

(5) *Red or Claret Quill*.¶ — A capital fly at all times, and particularly during the evening rise in summer. When puzzled what fly to put up, try this. The illustration (Fig. 21) is from a fly tied by Warner & Sons, of Redditch. Nos. 1 to 10 (No. 7 excepted) are all similar to this fly in shape.

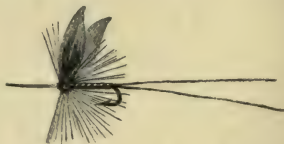


FIG. 21. RED OR CLARET QUILL GNAT.

(6) *Blue Quill*.**—This is also a Blue Dun, and is similar to the Blue Upright of Devonshire. The illustration (Fig. 22) gives

* Some of the leading London tackle-shops sell very good chalk-stream flies. Among the best provincial makers are Holland, of Salisbury; Ogden, of Cheltenham; and Currell, of Winchester.

† Wings, medium or pale starling. Body and legs: The body is formed of dark fur from a hare's face, ribbed with fine, flat gold, and the hare's fur picked out at shoulder to form legs. Hook, 0 or 00.

‡ Wings, dark or medium starling. Body, peacock quill, dyed an olive-green. Hackle and whisk dyed a brown-olive (the exact colours are shown in "Floating Flies, and How to Dress Them"). Hook, 0, 00, or 000.

§ Wings, tomtit tail. Body, the strip of the quill from one of the outside small feathers of a coot wing. Hackle and whisk, dark blue Andalusian. Hook, 00.

|| Wings, light starling. Body, peacock quill, dyed canary colour. Hackle and whisk dyed a brownish olive-green. Hook, 0, 00, or 000.

¶ Wings, pale or medium starling. Body, peacock-quill, dyed a warm reddish-brown. Hackle and whisk, red game cock. Hook, 0, 00, or 000. Mr. H. S. Hall gives me the following dressing of a Red or Claret Quill with which he has taken many fish in the evening; Holland, of Salisbury, has the pattern: Body, peacock quill, bleached, and then dyed in Judson's light brown and a few drops of claret. Wings, light starling. Legs and whisks, blood-red cock.

** Wings, light starling. Body, peacock-quill, undyed. Hackle and whisk, pale blue dun. Hook, 0, 00, or 000.

a fairly good idea of the appearance of the flies of this class. It will be noticed that they are like miniature May-flies. They belong to the same family.



FIG. 22. A DUN.



FIG. 23. DETACHED BADGER.

(7) *Detached Badger*.*—A most valuable fly, probably the best imitation made of the Red Spinner, a fly which takes trout anywhere and everywhere, from one end of the season to the other. The engraving (Fig. 23) is from a fly tied by Holland, of Salisbury.

(8) *Pale Olive Quill*.†—A variety of Olive Dun, useful throughout the summer and autumn.

(9) *Little Marryat*.‡—Mr. Marryat's imitation of the Pale Watery Dun, prevalent in August, September, and October.

(10) *Cinnamon Quill*.§—A useful fly at the end of the season.

(11) *Orange Sedge*.||—A useful evening fly in July and August.

(12) *Silver Sedge*.¶—A most valuable fly after June is past (Fig. 24). In the daytime it kills well if dressed on a small hook, and the brighter the day, the better it kills.



FIG. 24. SILVER SEDGE.
The Natural Fly has
a flat wing.

* Hackle, badger cock. Body, white horsehair, dyed a warm brownish-red, worked over a foundation of doubled bristle dyed the same colour, and the body ribbed with crimson tying silk. Whisk, pale cream-colour. Hook, 0 or 00.

† Wings, palest starling. Body, quill from young starling's wing or pale condor, dyed slightly in canary-colour. Hackle and whisk very slightly dyed in a brownish green-olive. Hook, 00 or 000.

‡ Wings, palest starling. Body, fur from the flank of the Australian opossum. Hackle and whisk, pale buff Cochin cock. Hook, 00 or 000.

§ Wings, pale starling. Body, the root-ends of some strands of peacock harl when stripped. Hackle and whisk, pale sandy-ginger. Hook, 0 to 000.

|| Wings, landrail. Hackle, ginger cock, carried right down body. Body, brown hare's ear, ribbed with fine gold wire.

¶ Wings, landrail. Body, white floss silk, ribbed with fine silver wire. Hackle, pale sandy-ginger cock hackle, carried right down the body. Hook, 0 to 3.

Late in the evening during the hot months there is hardly a better fly.

To these flies I would add the Wickham's Fancy.* It kills everywhere, and, as Francis Francis said, "it is one of the best general flies ever invented." It kills as well as any fly on a bright day. Nor must the Alder (see page 45) be omitted, it being a killing fly from May until the end of the season. The Sedges above mentioned should have naturally flat wings. Flies with no wings at all float very well, for in whatever position they fall, they are on their legs. I will refer to some flat-winged and fancy flies for Southern streams when I come to wet-fly fishing (see page 42).†

I should mention, that when the bodies of flies are detached—*i.e.*, not made on the hook-shank—they should be semi-transparent, otherwise they have no advantage. What is wanted is a hollow, detached body, which will float under any circumstances.

Casting the Fly.—In the first place, bear in mind all through your fly-fishing babyhood that the rod has to do far more work than the arm; in fact, the arm, except in long or peculiar casts, does very little. Begin by winding $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of lead wire near the top of the rod; then stand with *elbow close to side*, and, by sharp, short movements of the wrist only, make the rod bend first forward and then backward. You will thus learn how, aided by the weight of the line (in this case represented by the lead), a very great amount of play can be got out of the rod by short but sharp movements of the wrist. Next, remove the lead, put a reel on the rod, and the running line through the rings, and do a little preparatory practice.

Having drawn about eight yards of line off the reel, get it out as best you can. Then raise the rod-point a little, and

* Wings, medium or light starling. Body, flat gold, ribbed with fine gold wire. Hackle, bright red bantam cock, carried from shoulder to tail. Whisk, red cock hackle.

† Mr. Alfred Jardine has lately invented some flies with fish-scale wings, which are the best imitations of natural flies I have ever seen. Hardy Bros. tie them. They are very different to the pike scale-winged flies brought out some time ago. I have not given them an extensive trial, but I find that they will kill trout when other flies fail. Of course, fish-scale wings do not last as long as feather wings, but I would advise a few of these flies being kept in one's book, to be used to circumvent the extra shy fish one occasionally meets with.

when the rod is at an angle of about 45 deg., by a wrist movement bring it sharply back on your right side. Check your hand an instant as the rod points nearly straight up above your head—the line will then fly out behind you. Then, again using the wrist, bring the rod rapidly forward from the upright to the angle of 45 deg.—avoiding anything in the nature of a jerk—and check it. The line will fly out in front of you, and, if not a long one, the end of it will come to the water before any other part. In these quick movements of the wrist the chief difficulty of fly-fishing lies, and it is not until we have used a fly rod for some time that the muscles of the wrist become properly developed, and we acquire the knack of casting a fly well.

Give full time for the line to get out behind before making the forward cast. Mr. Halford tells me that, having, for the purposes of his book, had some instantaneous photographs taken of a fly-fisher in the act of casting, he has discovered that the line is not extended straight behind the angler until he commences to make the forward cast. This may be so as a rule, but I fancy with a heavy fly, such as is used for salmon, the line must sometimes be fully extended by the mere force of the backward cast. However that may be, it is necessary when making the cast I have described—known as the overhead cast—to pause a second or two between the backward and forward casts. Otherwise, the line will smack like a whip, and the fly very likely crack off. The longer the line, the longer, of course, must be the pause.

In the overhead cast, the rod points only a trifle to the right when the back cast is being made, and is almost upright when the forward cast is in progress. When that cast can be performed fairly well, the angler should practise sending his line as high in the air as possible when making the backward cast, the forward cast being made as before. This is known in Hampshire as the *steeple cast*, and by its means a very long line can be got out, and the line is not so likely to catch in bushes, reeds, &c., behind the angler.

The underhand or horizontal cast is the next to be practised. It is particularly useful when fishing with the dry fly. It is

very similar to the overhead cast, the only difference being that, in lieu of the rod being kept for the most part upright, it is held in a horizontal position, *i.e.*, in a line with the earth. The difficulty of this cast is to prevent the fly catching in grass or anything catchable in the meadow behind us, and, as a matter of fact, it can only be practised when the ground behind is flat and clear. The underhand cast, more often than not, causes the fly to cock; and the rod, being held low, is not seen by the fish. If you fail to cast lightly, aim at an imaginary point in the air, 2ft. above where you wish the fly to fall.

These three casts—the overhead, the steeple, and the underhand—are most used by dry-fly fishers. They are also very useful when wet-fly fishing; but before leaving the subject of casting, it will not be out of place to say a word or two about casts more especially useful for the wet-fly fisher. I

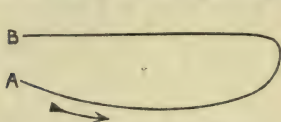


FIG. 25. LINE FOLLOWED BY ROD-POINT IN MAKING OVERHEAD CAST.

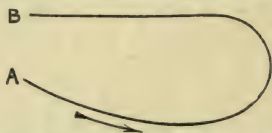


FIG. 26. BOLDER CURVE FOLLOWED BY ROD-POINT IN MAKING OVERHEAD CAST.

have said that in the overhead cast a pause is necessary between the backward and forward casts, and that the length of this pause depends mainly on the length of the line. It depends also, in a measure, on two other things. In the first place, a man with a strong wrist will bring his rod up so sharply that the line will get out behind him quicker than it would extend behind a man with a less strong wrist. On the rapidity with which the rod is brought back, therefore, partly depends the length of the pause. But another point has still to be considered. When we make the overhead cast, the point of our rod follows a line in the air somewhat the shape of that shown in Fig. 25, commencing at A and ending at B. Now, there is nothing to prevent our causing our rod-top to follow a much larger curve, such as that shown in Fig. 26, and we can go on increasing the curve

until we make the backward cast with the rod held parallel with the earth and the forward cast over our head. In that case, the rod follows a still bolder curve than that shown in Fig. 26. The larger the curve the rod-point makes in the air, the less the line goes behind the angler, and the less occasion is there for any considerable pause between the backward and forward casts. As a matter of fact, if the rod-point follows the curve shown in Fig. 26, the line hardly extends behind the angler at all. It will be seen that we have gradually worked away from the overhead cast, until we have arrived, in Fig. 26, at a cast of quite another character. This partly horizontal and partly overhead cast is very commonly used in Ireland.

There is still the switch or Spey cast, which I must mention, because it is particularly useful where, owing to trees or a high bank, the line cannot be extended at all behind the angler. It was taught me by Mr. David Wilson, the Honorary Secretary of the Fly-fishers' Club, who has fished the Spey from boyhood, and casts

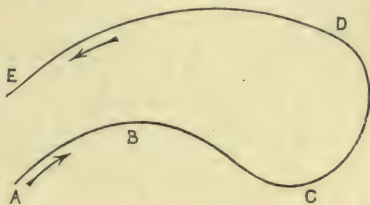


FIG. 27. CURVE FOLLOWED BY ROD-POINT IN SPEY OR SWITCH CAST.

a wonderful line after that fashion. It is not a difficult cast to understand, and I would beg of my young readers to master it, for it is at times most useful. It is necessary, in the first place, to fish down stream. We are looking down the river, let us say, with a high rock behind us. Our rod-point is rather low, pointing towards the fly, and our line is, of course, extended down stream. Suppose, now, our rod-point is at A (see Fig. 27); we raise it smartly, following the curve shown, to B, when our line will be off the water; then we depress it again to C, and raise it to D, by which time the fly and a portion of the line will be touching the water almost at our feet; then we switch the rod forward sharply from D to E, and the line follows round in a curve,

leaves the water, and rolls out down stream in front of us. The progress of the rod-point from A to D must be steady, and rather quick than slow; but from D to E it can hardly be too quick.

An extra long cast can be made in the following manner: Get out as much line as you can by making the steeple cast, then pull about 2yds. of line off the reel, hold the rod in the right hand, and the loose line about a yard from the first ring in the left hand. Then cast, and just before you check the rod at the end of the forward cast, let go the line which you hold in your left hand. The spare line will then, if you manage well, shoot out through the rings. Before making the second cast, this extra line must be gathered in. This method is one which I frequently practise myself, not only because it enables me to get out a long line, but because the fly never falls lighter than when the line is shot out in the manner described. It cannot be practised with a very light line, or one of silk and hair.

The angler, having acquired some proficiency in casting from his right side, should next practise casting from his left side, still holding his rod in his right hand; and if he can bring himself to cast well with the left hand, he will find his accomplishment most useful.

Playing and Landing the Fish.—Immediately you have struck a trout, if he goes off with a burst, let him make his first run unhampered by anything more than the check on the reel, and see that everything runs clear, for any sudden stoppage would cause a break. If the trout makes for the opposite bank, stand still; if he swims up stream, walk up stream; if down, walk down stream; nay, *run*, if he is going very fast, and seems likely to take out much line. If he is a big fish and leaps, lower the point of your rod a little, but otherwise keep the point well up—almost perpendicular. Immediately that first run ceases, walk quickly down stream, and reel up as fast as the fish will let you. Play him carefully according to circumstances, keeping an even pressure on his head—never so hard as to pull him, kicking, to the surface, nor so slight that the line slackens. As soon as the trout seems exhausted, coax him *over* the landing-

net. In fishing weedy streams, the one thing to do is to take the fish down stream over the weeds as sharply as the tackle will bear. If a fish is hooked in a little hole surrounded by weeds, try what impudence will do, *i.e.*, try and pull him out of his lair, willy, nilly, before he knows he is hooked. When playing a fish, always keep below him, if you can.

Never put a landing-net in front of a trout's nose, but sink the net in the water, and draw the fish gently over it. If the stream is strong, place the net behind the fish, and let the current carry him in. If you have no net, play the fish to some shallow, shelving bank, and strand him. If no such spot is near, the only thing to do is to play him until he is *thoroughly* exhausted, and lift him out, grasping him firmly over the gills. I have before now landed a fish in my creel, and once a luncheon hamper was made to do duty for a landing-net.

Fishing with the Floating Fly.—First of all, find a fish feeding on flies—not a chance riser, but a fish which has come to the surface to have a meal, and is putting up his nose every minute or so to seize the flies which float over him. Meanwhile, note the flies on the water. If you are in Hampshire, the majority of flies will, as likely as not, be duns. Note their size and colour, and attach as near an imitation as you have to the end of your cast (see page 30). Then test your cast. Having found a fish, if he is above you, walk stealthily within casting distance, keeping as far below him as you can. Keep as low as possible. Kneel down, pull some line off the reel, note exactly the spot where he rises, and, after one or two false casts, to get the line out and measure the distance, cast your fly with the greatest care about 3ft. in front of him.* Then let the fly float, *without the least drag*, exactly over the nose of the fish, just as the natural insect would do. If your line is well greased,† you can, supposing you have not risen the trout, at once make a second cast, as the fly will not yet be wet; but if the line is not greased, it will sink, and, in

* The faster the stream, the farther should the fly be cast above the fish. Sometimes a trout which has ignored a fly drifted over him will rise to one cast so that it fall exactly over him.

† Red deer's kidney suet is much used for the purpose. Mutton kidney suet is about as good.

withdrawing it for a fresh cast, the fly will be drawn through the water, and be thoroughly soaked. Hence, greasing the line (take care no grease gets on the gut) saves a very great deal of labour in drying the fly. When the fly is once wet, it must be waved backwards and forwards in the air until sufficiently dry to float. When it is thoroughly soaked, let it dry in or on your cap, and put up a fresh fly.

This method of fishing is usually practised up or across the stream, but it sometimes happens that the angler is absolutely obliged to let his fly drift down stream over a feeding fish—this is termed drifting.

If the fish refuses the fly, try him again, unless you have put him down—*i.e.*, have caused him to cease feeding. If after four trials, in each of which your fly *has* passed over him, he still feeds and still refuses, stop fishing for four or five minutes, and in the meantime put up another fly; and my advice is, so long as that fish feeds (provided you are certain he is feeding on flies) continue to fish for him, and in the long run you will have him. Some fly-fishermen would say, "Give the fish a rest"; but I have always noticed that it is the men who persistently stick at rising fish who catch the most trout.

When the fish takes the fly, strike, but not too hard, and play him in the manner already described. It is, perhaps, as well, especially for a beginner, not to touch the line when striking, but to strike, as it is termed, from the reel.

The dry-fly fisherman is, nautically speaking, on his beam ends when the fish are *bulging*, *i.e.*, swimming about after the larvæ of flies; or *smutting*, *i.e.*, feeding on very small black smutty-looking flies, when they usually refuse the artificial fly altogether; or *tailing*, *i.e.*, rising with their tails only, their heads being either buried in the weeds in search of larvæ, water shrimps, &c., or at work on the bottom; and generally when the trout are not taking the natural fly from the surface of the water.

The points to which the beginner in dry-fly fishing should give particular attention are: Not allowing the trout to have the least inkling of his presence; keeping well below the fish; greasing the line; accurate casting; using as good an imitation as possible of the fly on the water; the use of the horizontal or underhand

cast; cocking the fly; not allowing the fly to drag;* striking from the reel; and playing the fish down stream. A fact worth remembering is that when the sun is low the shadows are long.

The May-fly Season.—In favourable seasons May-flies (Fig. 28) appear in incredible quantities. They come not from caddis, as is very commonly believed, but from larvæ not very unlike the larvæ of the Stone-fly. They can easily be found by digging in sandy mud by the river any warm day in spring and summer; and I need hardly say that, fished in the same manner as the Creeper (see Chapter III.), they are an equally deadly bait. In the North Country the Stone-fly is often called the May-fly.

On Hampshire streams the May-fly usually appears between the 4th and 10th of June. If the weather is very hot, the flies hatch out in myriads, and the May-fly season is a short and a bad one; for the trout have so many natural flies to feed on that they choose only those that take their fancy (usually not yours), and soon get glutted with flies. If, on the other hand, the flies hatch out fairly slowly, and the weather is dull, with occa-



FIG. 28. GREEN DRAKE, OR MAY-FLY.

sional showers, most extraordinary sport may be had with the trout. As a rule, the season lasts from ten to twenty days.

For a few days before any May-fly are visible a slight hatch commences under water, and the trout seize all the flies before they come to the surface. Trout will then often take the artificial fly fished wet. I do not know a better pattern for the purpose than that shown in Fig. 29. I had it carefully dressed to my own ideas† by Warner & Sons, and partly based

* This is an axiom devoutly believed in by Hampshire dry-fly fishers, but I have frequently known trout, which ignored a dry fly drifted without drag several times over them, rise boldly when a quivering motion was given to the rod, and the fly seemed to struggle on the water.

† Straw body ribbed with gold twist and painted with one coat of French polish. Tail, two whisks of brown mallard. Legs, speckled Florican hackle, over a turn of pale ginger hackle. Wings, four hackle tips—two long and two short—from a blue Andalusian cock, dyed a yellowish-green by being dipped in onion dye.

the dressing on the Francis pattern. This fly kills while the Green Drake—as the May-fly in its first stage is called—is up.



FIG. 29. THE AUTHOR'S (WET) MAY-FLY.

The Green Drake sheds its skin, and turns into what is known as the Grey Drake, the males being smaller and darker than the females. When the Grey Drake is on, my fly is not of much use. Another most excellent wet fly is sold by Ogden, of Cheltenham, which, though unlike the natural fly, is very deadly whenever the trout will take the wet fly.

For dry-fly fishing the fly must have wings of quite another shape, as will be seen by the engraving (Fig. 30) of a fly designed by Colonel Clark.* It is one of the best May-flies made, so far as my experience goes, and is peculiar in having the wings placed over the bend of the hook, the point of which is hidden in the hackles. I find the "Clark" fly is soon destroyed, but it rises fish well; it lasts longest if tied with Egyptian goose-wings. The "Champion," designed by Hammond, of Winchester, is another good floating fly. There is a peculiarly dressed fly, tied by Gowland, of Crooked Lane, which cannot help floating, owing to the way the wings are placed (1, Fig. 31). It is not very much like the natural fly, but Mr. G. F. Rogers, a member of the Fly-fishers' Club, is, to my knowledge, successful with it, but tells me that his

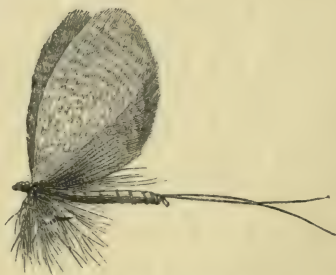


FIG. 30. CLARK'S MAY-FLY.

* Sold by Farlow & Co.

favourite fly is one tied on a small hook, by Holroyd, of Gracechurch Street (2, Fig. 31).*



FIG. 31. (1) GOWLAND'S MAY-FLY; (2) HOLROYD'S MAY-FLY.

It is all-important to have a good hook for May-flies. It must be long in the shank, light in the wire, and beautifully tempered, for it has to float, and must hold the fish. The Pennell hooks are good for May-flies, and I can also recommend for the purpose some patent eyed hooks made by Warner & Sons, which have capital eyes (see Chapter IX.).



FIG. 32. SPENT GNAT.

When the Grey Drake has shed her eggs, she quickly dies, and floats down the river with wings outspread, and is known as the Spent Gnat (Fig. 32). The wet fly is now on many waters much more useful than the dry fly. The very best

* The following is a good dressing for floating May-flies: Body, straw, ribbed with brownish-red silk. Run a small red cock's hackle down the body (to help the floating). Wings, Egyptian goose (very durable) or Canadian wood duck dyed a pale green. Legs, speckled Florican hackle. Tail, three whisks of brown mallard. The Grey Drake is little used, except as a Spent Gnat with wings outspread. A good dressing is similar to that given for the Spent Gnat, but with undyed Canadian wood duck wings, in lieu of the Andalusian cock hackles.

Spent Gnat made is pattern B* in Mr. Halford's "Floating Flies, and How to Dress Them." It can be fished either wet or dry. Spent Gnats are sometimes tied with the hook lying flat with the wings. This is a great mistake: the hook should swim in the usual manner, and not on its side, when the wings are extended on the water.

As regards the use of the dry May-fly, I have little to add to the remarks on pages 37 and 38. It is well to have a good supply of artificials, so that as soon as a fly gets wet it can be taken off, stuck in one's cap to dry, and another put in its place. In bright, hot weather the fly should be dressed rather small. On some days the fish prefer a fly which is half sunk to one wholly wet or dry. When the wet fly fails, try the dry; when that fails, try the semi-dry. When few or no fish are rising, try the wet fly well sunk and drawn slowly. If that does not succeed, cast a dry fly at the end of a long line on to the river and let it drift down stream, under your own or the opposite bank, and walk after it.

After all the May-flies have disappeared, go on using the wet fly—Spent Gnat for preference—for a week or ten days, and you may be rewarded. When the trout will not look at the artificial May-fly, try an Alder or a Red Spinner, and, failing that, a Silver Sedge.

Wet-fly Fishing is, in its way, quite as scientific as using the floating fly. In the first place, it requires a more thorough knowledge of the haunts of the fish. Then, again, as trout often take a fly under water very quietly and without breaking the surface, it is frequently a most difficult matter to detect the rises. It is, I am certain, no uncommon thing for chalk-stream trout to take a sunk fly and reject it without the angler being any the wiser. In moorland streams, where the current is swift and the fish are rather underfed than otherwise, the fish dash at a fly and a pluck is felt; but there is no way by which an angler can tell if a well-fed chalk-stream trout

* It is dressed thus: Wings, four blue Andalusian cock hackles, set on flat. Head, bronze peacock harl. Shoulder hackle, grey partridge. Ribbing hackle, badger cock. Body, white floss silk, ribbed with an unstripped strand of peacock, which is cinnamon-coloured at root, and dark at point, the dark portion being worked at the tail end. Whisk, brown mallard.

slowly sucks the fly into its mouth and rejects it. Of course, if the stream is fairly rapid, an observer will notice that his line is checked slightly, but in a slow-flowing stream this check is hardly noticeable.

The wet fly is most useful in the daytime where there is a ripple on the water either from wind or from the rapidity of the stream, or some obstruction, such as a lump of weed or an old pile. It is particularly killing late in the evening during the hot months, or where the water is slightly coloured. Fish will also take it well if it is cast right under the bank, close to the sedge. Indeed, I know no more killing method of using it on chalk streams than to walk up the left side of the river, and cast, with not too long a line, under your own bank: of course, if you can cast with your left hand, or from your left shoulder, you can do the same on the opposite side of the river. The fly should be allowed to drift back a yard or so towards you, the rod-point being meanwhile gradually lifted.

With regard to working the wet fly, perhaps, as a general rule, it is best to let it drift, without dragging it in the least. But there are days when the fish seem to want attracting, and then you may draw your fly gently across the stream. When drawing the fly, you will feel, if you do not see, every rise you have—no small advantage. On rather rough, wet days, a large fly, worked in jerks along the top of the water, will often rise fish when everything else fails. It is a capital plan, when casting up stream under your own bank in the manner described, to just dabble the fly towards you, by giving a slight trembling motion to the rod. When fishing after dusk, the fly should be cast out, and drawn slowly towards the angler.

On chalk streams the angler will sometimes find that the sparsely dressed hackle flies of the North Country, described in the next chapter, will kill as well as, or even better than, the more artistic imitations of Hampshire dressers. Never use more than one fly on a chalk stream, for you may hook large fish, and if the second fly catches in anything, as it probably will, the result will be disastrous. Whether the

fly should be dressed on eyed hooks or on gut, is not very material. Flies on eyed hooks last the longest, but I am inclined to think, though I always use eyed hooks myself, that the eye on the hook, when the fly is drawn through the water, may cause a slight disturbance in the water.

The flies already mentioned will kill used wet, in their respective seasons, but the upright wings are a decided disadvantage, causing a commotion in the water if the fly is drawn. In some patterns the wings can be omitted in favour of extra hackles. Generally speaking, use bright flies on bright days, and dark flies on dark days; on rough days larger flies than on calm days; and late in the evening



FIG. 33. THE MARCH BROWN.

larger flies than during the day. In early spring the trout are greedy, and seem to prefer a larger fly than later on. Of course, if you only copy the fly that is on the water, you may throw these rules to the winds; but when there is no fly, or you fail to rise fish with your imitation, remember what I have said.

In those southern streams where wet-fly fishing is useful, I generally begin in the spring with a large March Brown* (see Fig. 33), or a Hare's-ear (see page 30). The March Brown is a common fly north of the Trent, where it is called the Brown Drake, and in Wales, where it goes by the name of the Cob-fly; but it is little seen in southern England. However, it kills well early in the year, and what more is wanted? Possibly the fish take it for the larva of some fly. Dressed very small, it often kills well in the summer.

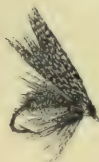
Later in the spring I use a smaller March Brown, the Hare's-ear, the Red Spinner (very similar to the Red Quill Gnat, but has a brownish-red silk body, ribbed with fine gold twist; a

* Body, Hare's-ear, ribbed with gold. Legs, hackle from partridge's back. Tail, two strands of same. Wing, dark mottled feather from cock pheasant's wing. For the female March Brown, mix olive fur with the Hare's-ear body, and make the wing lighter—a mottled woodcock feather.

splendid fly all through the season), and in May the Alder,* a very king among flies (see page 32). The one illustrated



Natural.



Artificial.

FIG. 34. THE ALDER.

(Fig. 34) was tied by Holland. Never be without a few Alders in your book, tied in several sizes, some as large as the

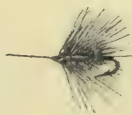
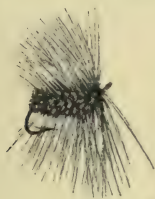


FIG. 35. PALMERS.

March Brown in Fig. 33, and others almost as small as the Red Quill Gnat in Fig. 21. Early in June comes the May-fly. While it is on, the artificial Drakes should, of course, be used, but the Alder will sometimes kill well.

After the May-fly is over, I place the greatest reliance on Silver Sedges, large and small, Cinnamon Sedges, Alders, Palmers (merely peacock harl body, with hackle brown or black from one end to the other—see Fig. 35), and Governors† (Fig. 36), large and small. During ordinary summer weather, little fishing will be had in the daytime, the trout only beginning to rise about sunset, when Sedges and other even-

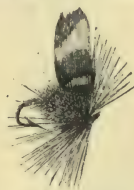


FIG. 36. THE GOVERNOR.

* Body, bronze peacock harl, which to get exactly the right colour should be covered with thin indiarubber. Legs, very dark brown hackles (rusty-red or black hackles are often used). Wing, hen pheasant tail, or bustard, flatter to body than in engraving for wet-fly fishing.

† Wings, woodcock, flatter than in engraving for wet-fly fishing. Hackle, ginger cock. Tag, primrose floss silk. Body, copper-coloured peacock harl.

ing flies come out. Long after dark they will take a fly, which may be a very large Coachman, Sedge, or White Moth. The Coachman is similar to the Governor, but has white wings and no tag. It was invented by a noted "whip." I use comparatively few flies, but those who like a more extended list will find Ronald's in a foot-note.*

Do not pay any attention to the dry-fly fishers who sneer at wet-fly fishing, or at the wet-fly fishers who ridicule dry-fly fishing. Learn both methods, and practise them as seemeth you best. If trout, instead of taking the floating fly, try to drown it, fish wet, and oblige them. Generally speaking, the wet fly, except at night, is of little use on well-fished club waters, where the trout are extraordinarily shy and wary, but it often kills better than the dry fly on private waters. In wet-fly fishing, there is no object in greasing the line.



FIG. 37. OGDEN'S ALEXANDRA.

Of late years, some of the salmon-fishers' methods have been applied to fly-fishing for chalk-stream and other large trout. Small Silver Doctors, Silver Greys, and Dusty Millers have (see Chapter IX.) been used, especially early in the season, with great effect; but the fly which has proved most deadly—so deadly that it is very properly barred on many waters—is the Alexandra. It is dressed in various ways, and is supposed to imitate a minnow. The one engraved in Fig. 37 was dressed by Ogden, of Cheltenham.† It is a killing pattern.

* *March.*—Red Fly, Cock Wing, Early Red Spinner, Water Cricket, Great Dark Drone, Cowdung, Peacock Fly, March Brown, Great Red Spinner. *April.*—Golden Dun Midge, Sand Fly, Stone Fly, Gravel Bed, Grannom, Yellow Dun, Iron-blue Dun, Jenny Spinner, Hawthorn. *May.*—Little Yellow May, Black Gnat, Oak Fly, Turkey Brown, Little Dark Spinner, Yellow Sally, Sky Blue, Fern Fly, Alder. *June.*—Green Drake, Grey Drake, Orange Dun, Coch-y-bondu, Dark Mackerel. *July.*—Pale Evening Dun, July Dun, Gold-eyed Gauze Wing, Wren Tail, Red Ant, Silver Horns. *August.*—August Dun, Orange Fly, Cinnamon. *September.*—Blue-bottle, Whirling Blue Dun, Willow Fly.

† Wings, peacock harl, with a few fibres of mallard and red feather (flamingo for preference). Body, silver twist. Legs, a little black hackle. Tail, peacock harl, and a few fibres of flamingo. It is a capital pattern. Another good pattern has a little jungle cock and dark mallard in the wing besides the harl, and harl for legs. Indeed, the fly can be varied in many ways, and will kill well, provided the body is either silver or peacock harl ribbed with silver, and there is some harl in the wings.

These flies, if flies they may be called, are cast and allowed to sink, unless the water is shallow, and drawn slowly. Sometimes the trout take them best when they are worked fast in jerks, and occasionally it happens that drawing them quickly along the top of the water gives the best results.

Blow-line Fishing, with the natural fly, is not so much practised on chalk streams as formerly, owing, I expect, to the improvement in the manufacture of artificial May-flies. The rod and tackle for this method of fishing come more appropriately in the chapter on Lake Trout, and will be found described in Chapter IV.; but in lieu of drifting in a boat, and allowing the fly to be blown along the surface of the water, the angler merely uses the wind to waft his fly over the water. When it has gone far enough out, his best plan usually is to let it fall on the water and drift where the stream may take it. Or he may endeavour to drop the fly just in front of a rising fish. On chalk streams this method is rarely practised, except with the May-fly, though any fly which may be on the water will do as well. Dipping or dapping the fly, described in the following chapter, will also take chalk-stream trout.

Minnow Fishing, though very deadly, is hardly ever practised in chalk streams, except in some deep pool or hatch hole, where the trout do not often rise to a fly, or for the purpose of catching some aged and ravenous old fish which is as destructive to its kind as a pike. Any of the minnow tackles described in the following chapter may be used with advantage, the drop-minnow tackle (see Chapter III.) being particularly deadly in hatch holes. The angler must, of course, fish fine, keep as much out of sight as possible, and cast across, and rather up than down stream. A large minnow will be taken greedily in early spring, but in summer a small one is better. Fishing with live bait—minnows or other small fish—is described in the chapter on Thames trout fishing.

Worm Fishing in chalk streams is but little practised, the fish giving so much better sport with the fly. So far as I know—and my worming experiences on chalk streams are very limited—the larger the worm, the more certain it is to take

fish. The worm may be cast out, and allowed to lie on the bottom, three or four shot on the gut, 1ft. above the hook, keeping it in its place. I have no doubt that the up-stream worm-fishing described in the following Chapter might be practised with success. A good many anglers may be surprised to learn that paste is sometimes a better bait than worms in chalk streams. Wasp grubs are deadly, so are caddis baits and gentles.

I strongly advise every would-be fly-fisher to study the following chapter as well as this; and, should his lines be laid in a chalk-stream district, to read Mr. Halford's "Dry-Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice." In the event of his becoming interested in the vagaries of insect life, he may also study Ronald's "Fly-Fisher's Entomology" with advantage, but should not copy the *artificial* flies therein.



CHAPTER III.

MOORLAND TROUT.

Habits and Haunts—Rod and Tackle for Fly-fishing—Some Useful Flies—Casting the Fly—Playing the Fish—Dibbing or Dapping the Natural Fly—Worm-fishing in Clear and Coloured Water—Spinning the Minnow—Artificial Spinning Baits—Trolling-Snap Tackle.



LEAVING the quiet-flowing streams of the low-lying lands, with their fat, lusty trout, which have so severely tested our patience and skill, let us journey to the country of moorland and mountain, and wet our lines in rivers of quite another character. Rocks now take the place of weeds; in lieu of mills we have waterfalls; and almost everywhere is quick-running water, now rippling over a gravelly bottom, anon foaming among big boulders, or dashing down some rocky gorge. Such streams as these we find principally in the north of Scotland, and the mountainous parts of Ireland and Wales, in Derbyshire, and on the moorlands of Yorkshire and Devon.

The trout in so many of these streams as are unpolluted by mines or manufactories multiply rapidly, but rarely average over $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Five to the pound is not an uncommon average. A few fish, however, may reach the comparatively enormous weight of 2 lb., and are as harmful in the stream as pike.

Spawning takes place early in the winter, and fly-fishing begins in March, or even February, which latter month is far too early, in my opinion. After spawning, the fish retire to quiet portions of the river until they are strong enough to take up their position in the fast-running water. About March they may be looked for in every spot where their food is likely to be swept by the current. They then spread over the rippling, gravelly shallows, where the water is 1ft. or more in depth, and in almost every eddy behind a rock there will be a trout. They will also be found in the eddying water on each side of the current rushing into the large pools, and on the shallows at the tails of such pools. In narrow runs between rocks there is usually a trout, and wherever trees overhang the river there are almost certain to be some good fish. If there should happen to be a long, deep, still reach of the river, there will probably be plenty of fish in it; but such places are not worth fishing, unless ruffled by the wind—and no wind, I may remark, is so good as one blowing up stream. Of course, a dry fly may be used on the calm surface of such a pool; but is it worth while to devote ten minutes to manœuvring a dry fly for the sake of a trout weighing $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.? The large fish, which might be worth the trouble, do not often rise to a fly in these streams, and, in fact, usually feed at night. In the few rather exceptional mountain or moorland rivers where the trout run a fair size, the dry fly should always be tried if the wet fly fails; but, generally speaking, it is far too slow and tedious a method for fishing rapid streams, in which the angler who has the most success is the one who, other things being equal, covers most water.

The Rod for this sort of fishing should, in my opinion, be of greenheart or split cane, light, single-handed, and not too stiff; but it must strike sharply from the point, and be on no account whippy, or many rises will be missed. The objection to a stiff rod is that, when fishing a sharp stream with fine tackle, there is so much resistance when the trout takes the fly that the cast is very apt to break. I do not agree with the anglers who advocate

FIG. 38. LIGHT 10FT. GREENHEART FLY-ROD, IN TWO PIECES.

double-handed rods for small trout. The idea is offensive to one's ideas of proportion, and with the heavy lines mentioned on page 20 sufficiently long casts can nearly always be made. In the previous chapter is an engraving of my favourite rod for fly-fishing generally. For small trout in particular, there is nothing better than a light rod, in two pieces, such as the one in Fig. 38, which was engraved from a capital little rod made by Hardy Bros., whose split-cane rods are well known. The reader should note the remarks on the care of rods on page 18.* The best rod-bags are made of a stuff called brown swansdown.

The Line and Reel.—As to these, I have little to add to what is stated on pages 18 to 21. As the rod for fishing in rapid streams is usually lighter than that used in chalk streams, the line and reel must be proportionately less heavy; 35yds. of running line is usually sufficient. The lightest reels are made of aluminium, but these are very expensive. Those made of vulcanite and metal are very good, and not too costly. The check should be *light*.

Gut and Knots have been described at length on pages 21-23 and 27-28. For small trout, the finest drawn gut should be used at the end of the cast. The blue-ink stain is a good one, but when fishing in peat-stained water I like my

* Highly-varnished rods with bright fittings are very objectionable. The more quiet and sober are the colours of the angler's rod, dress, and impedimenta generally, the more fish he is likely to catch. At the suggestion of Mr. Senior, Hardy Bros. have brought out a rod called the "Red Spinner," which is covered with a dull green enamel or paint, and does not flash in the sunlight. This rod has a telescopic handle, and can be lengthened 18in. or more in a few seconds. White lead, boiled oil, and a little lampblack, make a good colour for painting rods. As the mixture dries with a shiny surface, it should, when hard, be rubbed down with a little fine sand-paper.

gut stained brown, a colour easily obtained by means of brown ink or coffee lees.

On moorland streams it is usual to fish with more than one fly. In Scotland, as many as four are often used—sometimes six or eight, and even nine in loop-rod fishing—*i.e.*, fishing with no running tackle, the line being fastened to a loop at the end of the rod. I prefer two, and very often, particularly when the water is low and bright, have the best sport with a single fly, which can be cast into nooks and corners which, were more flies on the line, would have to be left unfished. Besides, three flies fall on to the water with treble the splash of one fly, and, unless the water is rough, the splash frightens the trout. In a big, broad, swift stream, when the water is a little coloured, there may be some advantage in using a number of flies; but in small streams I would strongly advise my readers to be content with two—three at the outside. There is great virtue in a dropper, or bob-fly, for, as the cast is drawn across the water, one of the droppers can be made to trip along the surface in a very attractive manner, and, unless the trout are feeding under water—in which case they will take the tail-fly, or stretcher—the drop flies will kill most fish. Mr. Senior, recognising the occasional advantage of using only one fly, and also the superiority of droppers over the tail-fly, very ingeniously made up a cast bearing one dropper and no tail-fly, and with it met with much success. Some anglers use horsehair for their casts. My advice is, Don't. The finest drawn gut is less thick, and double the strength. The advantages of horsehair are that it does not fray, and is elastic. At the same time, if you are in an out-of-the-way district, and have used up all your fine casts, do not forget that a very good substitute can be made from the nearest horse's tail. The strongest hair comes from the tails of young stallions.

There are several knots used for fastening droppers on to the line. The easiest, laziest, most clumsy, and most generally used knot is that marked A in Fig. 39. The flies are easily changed if this knot is used. As the dropper can revolve round the line, the cast is apt to get worn by the gut of the

dropper; so, when making up your cast, it is as well to let a piece of gut project from one of the knots for about $\frac{1}{4}$ in., and so have a double piece of gut on which to loop the dropper.

The second knot (B) is easily made. First of all, make a knot

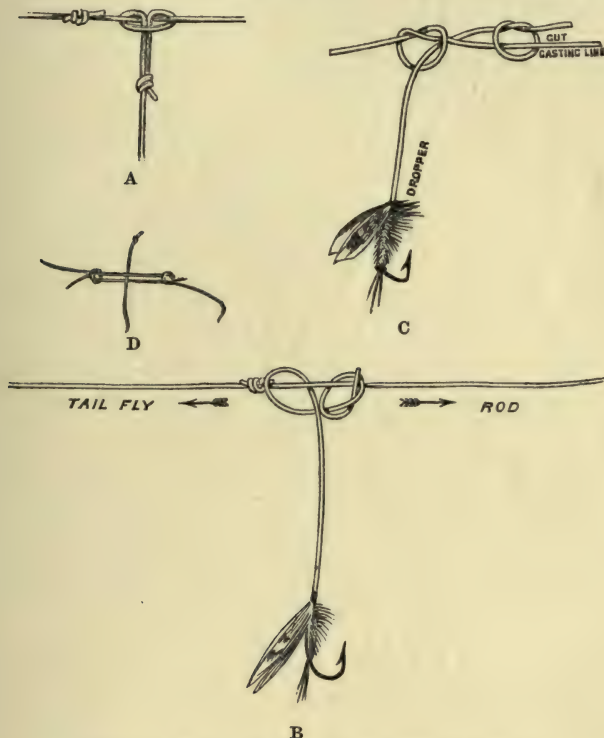


FIG. 39. KNOTS FOR FASTENING DROPPERS TO CAST.

at the end of the dropper. Tie the gut of dropper once round line, and then make a half-hitch, as shown in the illustration.

The third knot (C) explains itself. It is exceedingly neat, but necessitates breaking the trace every time a fly is changed.

To make the fourth knot (D), break your cast at a knot. Tie

the ends together with the fisherman's knot, but do not pull them tight, and leave $\frac{1}{2}$ in. gut projecting on each side. Then put the gut of the dropper (at the end of which previously make a knot to prevent it slipping) in the middle of the fisherman's knot, and pull the latter tight. To change the fly, pull the knot apart by means of the two short ends. On page 80 a most excellent knot is given, but it is not suited for the finest tackle. Always endeavour to tie on the dropper flies so that they do not swim on their back.

Dropper flies on hooks with the large eyes (eyed hooks and their knots are discussed on pages 27, 28) are very apt to get twisted round the cast; but not so the hooks with small eyes. The very small North-country flies certainly look neatest if tied on hooks bound to gut, but about the same number of fish will be caught whether eyed hooks are used or not. The gut of the dropper fly is often too long; $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. is quite long enough. If three flies are used, they should be put at intervals of a yard. If only two are used, the dropper should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ yd. from the tail-fly. Droppers should not be tied on very fine gut, or they foul the gut collar.

The Basket or Bag required for moorland-fishing need not be large. It should be light, and will be all the better for having two compartments—one for fish, the other for lunch and tackle. A small edition of my basket illustrated on page 25 can hardly be improved upon; but if a seat-basket is not required, I consider Kirker's patent creel, which is lined with enamelled zinc, by far the best thing to have.

A Landing-net is a thing I rarely encumber myself with when fishing for small trout; but, of course, it is wiser to carry one. A capital net and sling is illustrated on page 25, but a much smaller and lighter affair will answer the purpose. For instance, the net may be on a light wooden or whalebone bow, lashed on to an 18in. bamboo handle, which can be stuck in one's waders. If there is a knuckle-joint between the bow and the handle, the affair will hang on the landing-net strap in a handy manner. Sometimes I have carried merely the bow of my Hi Regan net attached by a loop to my buttonhole, and found it

quite enough. Corpulent people require a long handle to their landing-nets. This seriously.

Waders, which are very useful, I have already referred to on page 26; the remarks on the subject in Chapter IX. should be noted. See that the material is not too thin, if you have to wade in very cold water. Long, indiarubber boots are not to be recommended for rough wear.

Flies for Moorland Streams.—Almost any of the flies described in the last chapter will kill, if not dressed too large; and the angler will never go wrong if he imitates as nearly as possible in size and colour the fly on the water. Unfortunately, it happens more often than not that there is no fly to be seen on moorland streams. Notwithstanding this calamitous state of affairs, anglers have devised little arrangements of fur and feather which kill well, worked wet, whether the natural fly is on the water or not. I may mention particularly the spider-flies of Northern England. In Yorkshire, and in some parts of Scotland, the trout seem to like flies with little hackle and less body. Probably, many of the North-country flies, which are usually worked just below the surface, are taken by the fish for water insects, strange or familiar. As I have a considerable opinion of the killing powers of these flies, I asked two well-known Yorkshire anglers—Mr. T. E. Pritt, Author of “North Country Trout Flies,” and Mr. Francis Walbran, Editor of Theakston’s “British Angling Flies”—to give me their opinion as to which are the best killers. Both Mr. Pritt and Mr. Walbran were most kind, and not only sent me a list, but patterns as well. Mr. Pritt gave me three casts (one for each season):—For early spring (from March to end of April), Broughton’s Point* (tail fly), a splendid killer anywhere; Waterhen Bloa;† Woodcock;‡ and Dark Snipe,§ which, says Mr. Pritt, is “out and out the best spring fly at any time.”

* Wings, from a starling’s quill. Body, dark blue silk. Legs, a black hackle, with a few red strands interspersed.

† Body of yellow silk, dubbed with fur from a water-rat, hackled with a feather from the inside of a waterhen’s wing.

‡ Hackled with a mottled feather from the outside of a woodcock’s wing. Body of orange silk, dubbed sparsely with hare’s ear.

§ Hackled with a feather from the outside of a snipe’s wing. Body of purple silk.

From middle of April to end of June (for a change, though all the flies on the previous cast may be fished until the end of June, except, perhaps, the Waterhen)—March Brown;* Snipe Bloa† (always useful); Iron-blue Dun;‡ and Orange Partridge.§

From end or middle of June onwards—Brown Owl (tail fly);|| Poult Bloa;¶ Knotted Midge;** Yellow-legs (Yellow Dun).††

In September, the first cast may be used, varying it, if occasion arises, with a Dark Needle, Fog Black (see page 98), or Brown Owl.

Mr. Walbran sends me beautifully tied specimens of sixteen flies, most of which come in Mr. Pritt's list. The additional flies he mentions are: The Spanish Needle (summer and autumn), Winter Brown (spring and autumn), Dark Snipe and Orange (spring and autumn), Blue Partridge (April and May), Bracken Clock (summer), Stone Midge (summer), Fog Black (summer and autumn), August Dun, Grey Midge (summer), and Apple-green Dun (autumn). The Fog Black must be dressed from the feather of a bullfinch. Coloured illustrations of all these flies will be found in "North Country Flies," a work which every fly-fisher should have—except, of course, those who devote themselves solely to the dry fly. In Fig. 40 are engravings of a few of these flies, which will serve to indicate their size and form to the amateur fly-dresser. Mr. Walbran's special favourites are the Waterhen Bloa, Dark

* Wings, from the tail of a partridge. Body, pale orange silk, dubbed with a little hare's ear and yellow mohair, mixed; ribbed over with a little yellow silk. Tail, forked with two strands from a partridge's tail. Legs, from the back of a partridge.

† Wings hackled with a feather from inside of a jack snipe's wing. Body, straw-coloured silk.

‡ Wings, from a waterhen. Body, orange and purple silk, twisted, dubbed with down from a water-rat. Head, orange. Legs, from a coot.

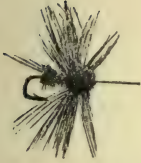
§ Wings hackled with well-dappled feather from a partridge's back. Body, orange silk.

|| Hackled with a reddish feather from the outside of a brown owl's wing. Body, orange silk. Head, peacock harl.

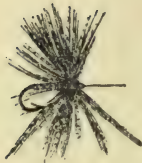
¶ Wings, hackled with feather from under young grouse-wing. Body, light yellow silk.

** Wings, hackled with feather from back of swift or martin, or from the shoulder of a pewit's wing. Body, ash-coloured silk, dubbed with heron's harl. Head, magpie harl.

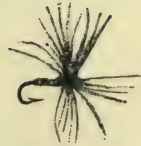
†† Wings, from young starling's quill-feather. Body, yellow silk, waxed well so as to make it nearly olive. Legs, ginger hackle from a Cochinchina hen's neck. Tail, two strands of same.



Waterhen Bloa.



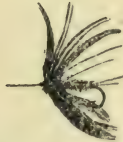
Partridge and Orange.



The Poult Bloa.



Fog Black.



Winter Brown.



Dark Snipe and Orange.



Blue Partridge.



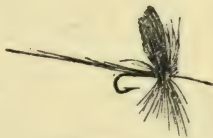
Bracken Clock.



Stone Midge.



August Dun.



Apple-Green Dun.



Dark Snipe and Purple.

FIG. 40. TYPICAL NORTH-COUNTRY FLIES.

Snipe and Purple, Snipe Bloa, Partridge and Orange, Bracken Clock, and Stone Midge. To the above I would add Greenwell's Glory,* a splendid killer.

In Devonshire, hackled flies are mostly used, but they are usually larger than the flies of Yorkshire, and less sad-coloured. The North Devonshire anglers are great believers in a little silver twist or tinsel, and plenty of hackle. In South Devon the Blue Upright is the favourite fly. It kills best in the spring and autumn. It is really a hackled imitation of the Blue Dun, though I do not for a moment suppose the trout take it for that fly.† Other standard flies are a sort of March Brown (brown quill body and partridge hackle), Brown Palmer (rendered more killing by a small, rich red tail of Indian crow), and Half Stone‡—these more particularly in the spring. For summer: Cowdung, Silver Twist, March Brown, Hare's Flax (*i.e.*, Hare's Ear, another form of the Blue Upright or Blue Dun), Red Upright (see Detached Badger, page 31), and Coch-y-bondu when the water is high. The Coachman§ is *the* fly for evening use. After dark, it

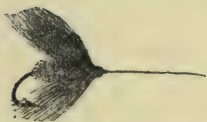


FIG. 41. A DEVONSHIRE FLY.

can be fished rather large. Dressed with a starling wing, it is a splendid brook-fly in the daytime. On the Exe and Teign, and in North Devon generally, the flies used are brighter and have more tinsel than the Dartmoor flies. The fly shown in Fig. 41 was tied by an old moorman, and kills well when the water is big. The body and hackles

are a smoky-blue, and the wings a rusty bluish-brown.

Mr. Cutliffe, in "Trout Fishing in Rapid Streams," gives a list of rather large and very bright flies of his own inven-

* Body, dark olive silk, thickly ribbed with fine gold wire. Legs, small coch-y bondu hackle. Wings, woodcock-wing.

† It is dressed in a variety of ways; one of the best is: Body, dark quill; smoky-blue hackle, and whisk to match hackle.

‡ Hackle, honey-dun cock. Body—lower half, primrose floss silk; upper half of pale mole fur.

§ Wings, white feather, as from swan. Hackle, red cock. Body, copper-coloured peacock harl.

tion, for use in North Devon. They are very good in the spring in heavy water, but not so good in the more quiet portions of the stream. Indeed, the angler who uses the local patterns will have the best sport in rather rapid water. In the more tranquil portion of the river he will catch few fish unless he uses smaller flies, more approaching the natural insect in appearance.

Devonshire and Yorkshire flies kill well in Ireland, where the ordinary South-country patterns may also be used with advantage. Flies with orange or yellow silk bodies, and partridge or grouse hackles, kill on any rapid stream that I have ever fished, and Red Palmers and Red Spinners (the latter dressed with and without wings)* are good everywhere.

In Wales, there are various local flies, which I do not propose to enumerate, as the flies already mentioned will kill quite as well there as anything else.

In Derbyshire, peculiar flies, called "Bumbles," are much used. The one shown in Fig. 42 was tied by Foster, of Ashbourne. Those tied with honey-dun hackles (see Orange Bumble, Chap. VII.) are great favourites, and I have found a Furnace Bumble,† with a hackle shorter near the tail of the fly than at the head, kill splendidly on the Dart and many other streams. Bumbles can be fished wet or dry. On Derbyshire streams dry-fly fishing is coming much into vogue, and with success, small Duns being much used. Many of the Hampshire patterns have been adopted by the Derbyshire anglers, and anyone who is provided with a few of the best North-country and Hampshire patterns, together with some Bumbles, will have everything that is needful in the way of flies for Derbyshire.

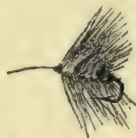


FIG. 42. A DERBYSHIRE BUMBLE.

* When making an imitation of a fly with upright wings for wet-fly fishing, it is usual to merely surround the head of the fly with hackle which represents, or is supposed to represent, both legs and wings. A far better plan is to imitate the wings with two tiny hackle-tips. This principle is carried out in my wet May-fly illustrated on page 40.

† Hackle, furnace or coch-y-bondu (centre and extreme points black, and remainder of hackle blood-red). Body, orange floss silk, ribbed with a strand of peacock sword-feather, and with fine flat gold.

In Continental streams, the best English flies will always kill, but the angler should be careful to have them dressed in different sizes, to suit the various states of the water. I doubt, indeed, if more flies are necessary than the following: Red Spinner, Red Palmer, Governor, Blue Dun, Yellow Dun, Coachman (some with starling-wing), March Brown, Black Gnat, Hare's Ear with Silver Twist, Sedge, Sandfly, Alder, and Furnace.*

This short list of flies would not be a bad selection for a boy just commencing to fly-fish. And as regards boys, on whose pocket-money the purchase of fishing-tackle makes serious inroads, let them not be deterred from fly-fishing by the expense. Several of the cheaper London tackle-shops sell fly-rods for half a guinea (I have noted some in Mr. Walbran's list) which are quite good enough to learn with; a small wooden reel, with a check, can be bought for half a crown, and about 35yds. of one of the Manchester Cotton Spinning Company's undressed, twisted lines, or dressed snooding used in sea-fishing, will make a good cheap casting-line. A youngster can thus be rigged out with rod, reel, line, casts, and flies, for something under £1. A landing-net is easily made at home, by lashing a thick wire, or wooden or cane hoop, on to an old walking-stick. The net also can be made at home, or bought for a few pence.

As flies on gut are much used in moorland streams, it will be useful to tell of a plan by which gut can be tied to a fly which has no eye. It often happens that we have only one fly of the right pattern left in our book, and when the gut to which it is attached is on the point of breaking, the fly is useless unless we can put a fresh piece of gut to it. An old moorman on Dartmoor showed me this little-known plan, which at times is very valuable. First, tie a knot at the extreme end of the gut, and tie the gut once round the bend of the hook. Then

* Excellent North-country flies are tied by F. Walbran, of Station Road, Leeds, who is a good all-round fly-dresser; Hardy, of Alnwick; J. Emmott, of Kilnsey, Skipton; H. Esson, Virginia Road, Leeds. For Derbyshire, there is Foster, of Ashbourne. For the Welsh streams, J. Ogden, of Cheltenham. For Devonshire, Bowden, of Exeter; Prickman, of Exeter; Clarke, of Newton Abbott, and Mudford, of Tiverton. For Scotland and Ireland, the makers of salmon-flies mentioned in Chapter IX.

tie a knot in the gut about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. above the fly, but do not pull it quite tight. Then put the head of the fly in the knot, and pull the gut tight, taking care that the gut between the bend of the hook and the head of the fly is strained quite tightly. I have had a large sea-fly attached to a piece of

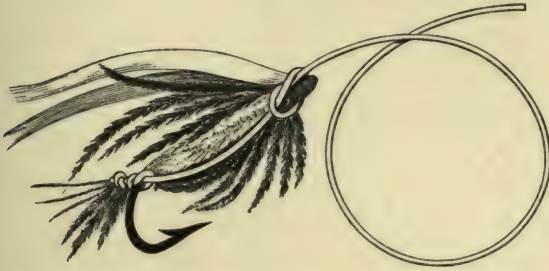


FIG. 43. HOW TO TIE GUT TO A FLY WHICH HAS NO EYE.

salmon-gut engraved, so that the knot may be shown clearly (Fig. 43). When fine gut is thus tied on to a small fly, especially one with plenty of hackle, the knot is very neat.

Trout-flies are legion. No one living knows, or ever will know, them all, and they are perpetually being added to. I need say nothing about the Alexandra in this chapter, as that much-abused bait has had its share of attention on page 46.*

Fishing with the Wet Fly.—The various methods of casting the fly have been already described on pages 32-36, so I will suppose that we arrive at the side of our trout-stream well knowing how to cast the fly, and with all our impedimenta—waders, net, casts, &c.—in proper order, but that we are rather in a fog as to the best way to fish the water and the fly to put up.

First, as to the fly. Is there a great quantity of any particular insect on the water? If there is, "put up" (fisherman's English)

* Foster Bros., of Ashbourne, have recently brought out some flies with membranous wings. I have had no opportunity of trying them, but they look killing, and I hear them well spoken of. They are suitable for wet-fly fishing.

any fly you have in your book like it in colour and form, but, if possible, smaller. If there are few flies on the water, consider then the time of year, the height and colour of the water, and the weather. If it is early spring, try rather large, bright flies. If the water is coloured, be sure and have a Red Palmer on your cast as tail fly. If the water is turbulent, use larger flies than if it is fairly tranquil. If the day is bright, use a bright fly, such as a Red Spinner, or a Coachman with a starling wing, or a Furnace Bumble. If the day be dark and dull, use sombre flies. Bear in mind, that if you have very small flies on your cast, it is not much use casting them into very rough water; and, in the same way, if your flies are rather large, you will catch more fish with them in the rougher portions of the stream than where the river flows quietly.

Well, the cast is chosen and made up. Our gut is straight, having been moistened in the damper-box, or drawn on a piece of indiarubber (see page 24, and also note remarks on wet-fly fishing in previous chapter). Approach the stream cautiously, and drop the flies over your own bank. Then try out in the middle, then across, and work your way up stream, casting to every spot likely to contain a trout. Keep yourself as low as you possibly can. If the banks are high, and the water sufficiently shallow, wade up stream, casting in front of you; but do not wade unnecessarily, for it spoils the sport of those coming after you. As your flies drift down towards you, raise the point of your rod, and strike quickly at the least sign of a rise, or on perceiving a tightening, however slight, of the line. On this account keep careful watch both where you believe the flies to be and also on the line. Never forget to carefully fish close under the bank wherever there is any depth of water.

Two things are particularly essential to success: 1. The angler must keep out of the sight of the fish; 2. His shadow must not fall over the fish. To obtain the first desideratum, up-stream fishing is usually absolutely necessary, and, if the water is very shallow, a long line must be cast. Down-stream fishing is only to be preferred where the water is very swift, and its surface sufficiently ruffled to prevent the fish seeing through

it; or when the sun, river, and angler are so positioned that the angler's shadow would be over the fish were he to cast up stream. In rather thick water, when the trout rise slowly, the flies have often to be sunk, and held a few seconds. This process can only be managed down stream. The only way to get the flies over fish in a portion of the river completely overhung with branches, is to drop the cast in the water in a clear place, and let the current carry it along, as much line being let off the reel as may be necessary. This is, of course, one method of down-stream angling. Always remember, when fishing eddies, that the water in them flows the reverse way to the stream, and fish them accordingly.

A point to be remembered is that trout can often see the angler when the edge of the bank actually intervenes between them. Refraction in the water enables the fish to see round the corner. If you do not believe me, place a penny in a pudding-basin, and walk backwards from it until the rim of the basin just hides the penny. Then get a friend to slowly pour water into the basin. Before it is full you will see the penny, though neither you, nor the basin, nor penny have moved. The penny represents the trout, the water the river, the edge of basin the river's bank.

Do not stand on banks so that the trout see your manly proportions against the sky. Get a hill, trees, a wall—anything—as a background, whenever you can. When casting, keep your rod as low as possible, for the flash of the rod frightens fish; but the flash can be reduced to a minimum if the rod is treated after the manner described in the footnote on page 51. Do not wave your arms about, and be careful to tread lightly, especially if the banks are boggy or hollow. I know several brooks from which very few trout are caught owing to the vibration of the bank when trodden upon.

When on a small, rocky stream, fish quickly. If the water is much broken, the fish will not be able to see you, and you can walk up stream and, casting with a short line, pick out fish after fish from every little nook and corner. If they run small—about five to the pound—do not attempt to play them, but whip them out on to the bank as fast as you can. You

will find the hook tumble out of the mouths of five fish out of six, and most of these five fish would have got off if any attempt had been made to play them.

Up-stream fishing is best, because, to put it shortly, fish lie head up stream, and cannot see behind them.

Night or Bustard Fishing is a very simple matter—so simple, indeed, as to be hardly sportsmanlike. It is carried on on warm summer nights, and is only permissible when, owing to the lowness and brightness of the water, no fish can be caught during the day. Use only one fly—a Brown or White Moth (the artificial moths are termed “Bustards”), or a Coachman, dressed on a No. 4, or even larger, hook. If the large, Brown Sedges are about, the Brown Moth, or Sedge, is to be preferred, but when the White Moths are flitting over the meadows, a White Moth should be put up. A Coachman is usually killing. Fish as soon as it is quite dark. Have a short line, and cast your fly down stream, across the river, or under your own bank. Hold the rod steady for a few seconds, then draw the fly very slowly up stream, and if a trout seizes the bait, strike, and play him as best you can. The night-fisher, of course, wants to know both the river and its banks well, and will only fish clear places, where there are no trees or rocks to foul his line. In small, moorland streams the deep, still pools are the places to be fished after this fashion. On the Eden a great amount of night-fishing is carried on, and the Carlisle angler does not hesitate to wade on the darkest nights. In the hot months, when hardly a fish is to be caught during the day, visit the stream an hour before sunrise, and during that hour, and longer, you may enjoy capital sport. On mountain streams I have generally had my best fishing before sunset, the fish rising best, as a rule, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. After the sun has gone down it is chilly on the uplands, and an evening rise, such as there is on chalk streams, is uncommon.

Fishing with Natural Insects may be pursued on moorland streams, with a blowline, in the manner described on page 47. Another method, called dapping, or dibbing, or shade-fishing, is to use a long, light, stiff rod, about 2ft. of gut, a fine silk line,

and a small pistol-bullet placed above the knot, between the gut and line. The fly being impaled on the hook, the line is reeled up until the bullet comes against the point of the rod. The tackle should be put through a hole in bushes by the river, so that it overhangs the water. The line is then released, and is carried out by the weight of the bullet until the fly touches the water, when the reel is checked. On open streams this plan is not very deadly. In no place is it deemed very sportsmanlike; much more artistic is it to cast the natural fly.

The fly which is, perhaps, most used in the natural state, is the Stone-fly. It is better known in the Midlands and the North, where it is often called the May-fly, than in the South of England. The male and female flies differ somewhat in



FIG. 44. STONE-FLIES.

appearance (see Fig. 44). Both are used, and anglers differ as to which is the most killing. The trout may like the large fly best, but fewer fish are missed when small baits are used. The hook should be put in at the thorax of the male, and brought out at the tail. Two hooks are commonly used for the large, female fly, which is placed on them in the same manner as the Creeper (see page 66). The Stone-fly makes its appearance in May, and remains until the middle of June, or later. There are no particular directions to be observed in its use. It is most killing—as, indeed, all flies are—when the water is a little high and coloured. On some days it kills best on the surface, on others if sunk a little; and the trout always take it more freely—as, indeed, they will any flies—if it is cast close to the bank, or by stones or rocks. The Stone-fly requires very delicate casting, and the

angler must have the wind at his back to do much good with it. Cummins, of Bishop Auckland, has invented a very useful zinc

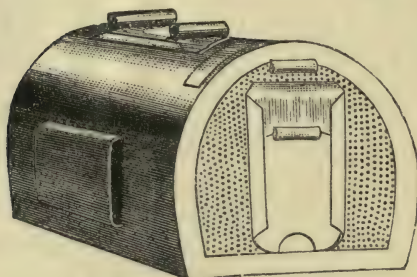


FIG. 45. BOX FOR STONE-FLIES.

box (Fig. 45) for Stone-flies. It has the merit of being inexpensive, and can be strapped on to the waist.

Creeper - fishing may fitly be mentioned here. The Creeper (Fig. 46) is the larva of the Stone-fly, and is a very deadly bait for trout, especially when the water is low and

bright. It is usually placed on the two-hook tackle as shown in Fig. 46. The end hook is put in at the throat, and brought out near the tail. The top hook is then put through the head or neck. A 2-yd. or 3-yd. gut-cast should be used, and the addition of a couple of small shot about 9in. above the hooks is advisable, except in very shallow water. The creeper is worked in exactly the same manner as the worm in clear water. This method of fishing begins about April, and continues until the larvæ turn into flies. The yellow Creepers are the best, the blackish ones being of little use. They can be kept in a cellar, in damp

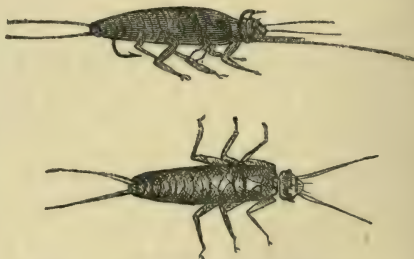


FIG. 46. CREEPER, BAITED AND UNBAITED.

moss, but quickly die in still water. Boys will usually catch abundance of this bait. Failing boys, put on waders, and stir up the bottom with your foot in front of a fine-meshed landing-net, into which the disturbed Creepers will be washed.

Just before turning into flies, Creepers will be found near the sides of streams, under flat-bottomed stones. Of course, the larvæ of other flies besides those of the Stone-fly may be used as a bait for trout.

In Devonshire, a little brown beetle, called the Fern-web, is largely used for taking trout in June and July. It is found on the bracken fern in great numbers. Put one or two of these beetles on a large Limerick hook (eyed for preference), blow open the wing-cases and wings, and chuck the lump where the trout are. If the fish do not see you, they will take the bait. The method requires little skill. Grasshoppers (much used on the Continent), spiders, beetles—in fact, almost any kind of insect—may be used as bait for trout. In Derbyshire, ants' eggs are a favourite summer bait, and I believe egg-paste is a good deal used, but have not tried it. In some waters trout take bread-paste eagerly.

Worming in Clear and Coloured Water.—I will deal with the last-mentioned first. The tackle is simply a fairly stiff rod, a light line, and a short length of gut, terminated by a round-bend hook of a size (generally No. 11, Kendal scale, or No. 4, Redditch scale) to suit the worms. Ten inches above the hook bite on one to four shots. Bait with brandling or other worms (I never find the trout very particular when the water is thick), and drop the bait in the water just on the edge of the current, and fish water which is quiet and not too deep. Let the worm sink, and allow the current to work it about close to the bottom. Every eddy and quiet corner should be fished, and when the angler chances on a spot where the trout seem plentiful, there he may remain for an hour or more. It is by no means grand sport, but the largest fish in the river are often taken with worms during a spate. The three-hook tackle shown in Fig. 47 may, of course, be used, but it frequently catches on the bottom, which in eddies is apt to be foul.

Worming in clear water is quite another matter. It is carried on more particularly when the rivers are at their lowest and brightest, in the hot months, and when fly-fishing, except at night, is next to useless. For this method of fishing

the rod should be long and light. Many Scotch anglers use rods 15ft. long; but my own preference, except for very big rivers, would be for one about 12ft. in length. The line should be a rather fine, dressed, eight-plait silk; it need not be tapered. The gut-cast should be about $2\frac{1}{2}$ yds. in length, and at the end next the worm of the finest undrawn gut if it can be obtained, or failing that, moderately fine-drawn gut. Stewart tackle (Fig. 47) is commonly used, but many



FIG. 47. THREE-HOOK WORM TACKLE.



FIG. 48. TWO-HOOK WORM TACKLE MADE WITH EYED HOOKS.



FIG. 49. THREE-HOOK TACKLE, BAITED.

anglers prefer two hooks, and some declare that a single hook (Mackenzie bend) is far the best. In Fig. 48 the two-hook tackle is shown made with eyed hooks. Such a tackle can be made by anyone in five minutes. The end hook is tied on with the knot shown on page 27. The two-hook tackle I usually bait by inserting the point of the large hook about the *middle* of the worm, and threading it through to the tail, then catching the head of the worm on the top hook. The three-hook tackle is baited according to the method shown in Fig. 49. No attempt need be made to cover the hooks. It is as

well to have no great length of worm hanging beneath the lower hook or above the upper one. I have seen Stewart tackles made with very small hooks. In some ways they are good, but, unfortunately, they fail to hook the trout. No. 4 hook (Kendal scale) is about the right size for this kind of fishing.

The worms may be carried in an open-mouthed bag, hung by a loop to the buttonhole, or in a tin box strapped to the waist. Brandlings, redworms, very small lobworms—in fact, any *small* worms—may be used. They should be scoured, and toughened by being kept in damp moss for several days. A little cream or milk poured on the moss is supposed to assist the process. When baiting, the angler will find a little bag or box of fine sand, or even dry earth, of much use. The worm, having been dipped into the sand or earth, is no longer slippery to handle.

The most deadly and most usual method of working the worm in clear water is to wade, and cast the worm up stream. The cast must be made with a bold sweep of the rod, anything in the nature of a jerk causing the worm to fly off the hooks. Immediately the worm touches the water, the rod-point should be slowly raised (very slowly if the stream is slow, but faster if the stream is fast) until the worm is carried by the stream within a yard or so of the angler, when it should be brought out of the water with a back sweep of the rod, which should then, as I have already indicated, be brought round in a bold curve, and the worm cast forward. Half the secret of success in this method lies in raising the point of the rod while the worm is in the water, neither too slowly nor too fast. If too fast, the worm is dragged down stream; if too slowly, there will be so much slack line that the bites will not be noticed until too late. *Keep as little line as possible in the water.* The beginner will, in any case, miss many bites, for usually the only evidence of a bite is a stoppage of the line. Therefore, watch the line most carefully. Of course, we cannot wade up the centre of all streams; some we must fish across, but rather in an upward than downward direction. If the water is a little heavy or deep, a shot, or even two, may be necessary to bring the worm before the fish; but, generally speaking, the most

pleasant and most successful method of worming in clear water is to leave the deeps and very heavy waters alone, and fish only the more quiet streams from 1ft. to 3ft. in depth. Always be looking out for likely places for fish, and, having noted them, cast your worm into them, keeping as much out of sight of the fish as the nature of the ground and your own skill will allow. The anglers who exercise a little thought while fishing, and do not cast heedlessly here, there, or anywhere, bring home the best baskets.

Generally speaking, any drag on the worm is to be avoided; but sometimes, and particularly in rather still water, the trout seem to like a worm worked with a sink-and-draw motion; but for



FIG. 50. SLICED HOOK.



FIG. 51. HOOK WITH BENT SHANK.

this the tackle must be very fine. Some anglers occasionally spin the worm, but I believe that where trout will take a spinning worm well, they will take a spinning minnow better. Worms on Stewart tackle will almost always spin; but if on a single hook, there must be a hog's bristle whipped on to the shank, to keep the worm from slipping down; or a Marston sliced hook (Fig. 50) may be used; or the end of the shank of an ordinary hook may be softened, and bent out as shown in Fig. 51. I need hardly say that, when spinning the worm, one or two swivels must be tied in the cast. One may be placed between the cast and the reel-line, and another about the middle of the cast.

With reference to this subject, the remarks on casting the fly

and the haunts of trout should be read. By the way, when trout are seen rising in pools or other quiet waters, they will often take a small worm on the finest of tackle, if it is cast lightly just in front of them. A good deal of skill is required to catch trout in this way.

Spinning the Minnow is a deadly method of trout-fishing when the water is a little high, and slightly coloured.

. Now is the time,
While yet the dark brown water aids the guile,
To tempt the trout.

The best rod for the purpose is a long, light, bamboo cane, with greenheart top and the fittings shown on page 16, the top-ring, however, being the same as is recommended for salmon-rods in Chapter IX. The line commonly used is an eight-plait, dressed silk one—almost the smallest size made. But if the angler can, or wishes to, cast in the Nottingham fashion, the line should be similar, but undressed. Fifty yards, wound on a Nottingham reel with a check and line guard (see page 19), is an ample length, except for large rivers. Below the reel-line, a trace with swivels, and with or without lead, is required. The lead should always be arranged on



FIG. 52. IMPROVED LEAD FOR SPINNING, WITH DOUBLE SWIVEL.

the principle of the one shown in Fig. 52—i.e., below the level of the line. With these leads the line never kinks. Small, double, brass swivels should be placed just below the lead. No others are required, unless the lead is not used, when not less than four should be on the trace. The lead illustrated is made by Farlow. One as good for this purpose may be made as follows: Take from four to six shot of different sizes, string them on fine gimp or coarse gut, placing the smallest at each end, and whip the ends of the gimp or gut to the trace just above the swivels. Below the lead should come not less than 1 yd. of gut—very fine for bright water, rather stouter if

the water is coloured, or the trout run large. At the end of this length of gut should be a large loop, to which the minnow tackle is attached.

Of minnow tackles, there are many bad, a few tolerable, but none really good. The trout come at them well enough, but the percentage of pricked fish is terrible. Most Scotch anglers use the tackle shown in Fig. 53, and I am inclined to

think that for *small* minnows it is the best. To bait it, insert point of large hook in at mouth of minnow, and out at end of tail, keeping it as near the spine as possible; then put lip-hook through lips of bait. The triangle should be stuck on outside curve of bait, and is not used at all in very low, clear water. It occurs to me, that the addition of a little red lead on the shank of the hook (as shown in the engraving) might be an advantage, but I have not tried it. A *very small* Chapman spinner (a good form of which is shown in Chapter IV.)

spins the minnow beautifully, and in a most attractive manner. I

can safely say, from experience, that the

fans are disregarded by shy trout. They should be silver-plated. The Dee tackle (Fig. 54) is also very good; in fact, I think it hooks better than any other tackle; but it has its faults: The lead must be taken off the gut, and the gut be

put through the bait from vent to head by means of a baiting-needle; and the minnow is apt to get pulled up out of shape



FIG. 53. NORTH-COUNTRY SPINNING TACKLE.



FIG. 54. DEE MINNOW TACKLE.

if a bad cast is made, and it does not always spin well. At the same time, if skilfully adjusted, it hooks and holds fish. Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell has invented a tackle in which the gut goes outside the bait, and the upper triangle is hooked in the back of the minnow instead of the vent. It is a good tackle, but I have always found a difficulty in getting it small enough.

There has recently been brought out a tackle not unlike Mr. Pennell's, called the "Imperceptible Spinner." The lead which goes into the bait is fixed on to a soft copper sword, which goes through the bait from head to tail. By bending the sword, any degree of curve can be given to the minnow, and the triangles can be put on the outside of the curve. The idea is as old as the hills, but it has not been so well carried out heretofore.

The great point to be observed is to use very small minnows (unless, of course, the water is considerably coloured), for a trout can get hold of a small bait much better than a large one. For small minnows, I would, as I have said, certainly give the preference to the North-country tackle.

The minnow may be cast in a variety of ways. Use a long cane rod (16ft.), and merely swing the minnow across the stream and draw it back; or use a grilse rod, and cast it like a fly; or use an 11ft. rod, and cast it underhand, Thames fashion, letting line run through the rings. The line in this method may be in coils on the ground; or the angler may cast directly off the reel (this is only possible if a lead of some weight is either in minnow or on trace); or two loops of line may be pulled down from between the rings, to be released as the minnow is cast out. The last-mentioned method is little used by trout-fishers, but is well worth learning. It is illustrated in "Angling for Coarse Fish."

Draw the bait fast enough to make it spin well, and no more. Usually cast across the stream, and rather up than down; but in very bright and not too rapid water cast straight up and draw down. This is difficult, but not impossible, and takes far more fish than any other method. Spin close to the bank. Search every corner, even as

you would with a fly. If casting straight down stream and spinning up, which is not often advisable, draw the bait very slowly. Spin where the fish are; their haunts have been already described.



FIG. 55. WATCHET MINNOW.

Artificial minnows, like flies, are legion. The best for rapid trout-streams are the Devon and the quill minnow. Devons vary somewhat. In the old-fashioned ones, the hooks were everlastingly coming away from the bait. Two new varieties which approach perfection are Farlow's Watchet bait (Fig. 55), and the Salvus min-

now, sold by Perrot, of Kingsbridge, South Devon. In the Salvus minnow the bait never leaves the hooks when being cast, but as soon as a fish is hooked it runs up the line. The same may be said of the Watchet minnow. A very excellent and beautifully-made quill minnow is illustrated in Fig. 56; I obtained it from Bowness, of Temple Bar. It is so light that it can, if desired, be cast like a fly. It is a most killing bait. Cummins, of Bishop Auckland, sells some excellent quill minnows made in a slightly different way, which

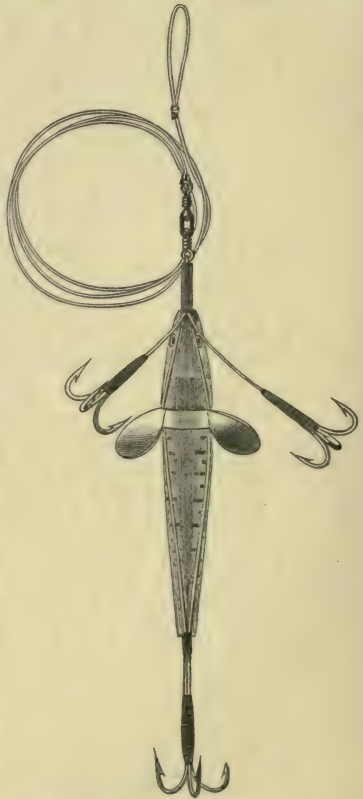


FIG. 56. BOWNESS' QUILL MINNOW.

will stand much rough work. They can be weighted by the insertion of a few shot. Another good spinning bait is the Halcyon, made by Hardy Brothers, which is simply a little bunch of peacock harl, spun by means of two fans at the head. Its one fault is that it pricks very many fish, and for that reason is very properly prohibited on many fisheries. Some anglers prefer baits which spin from the tail, and have no fans at the head; but my own experience is that more trout are safely hooked on straight baits than on those with curved tails.

Minnow Trolling Tackle is little known in the South, but a good deal used in the North. It is most suitable for deep holes, under hollow banks, and similar places. Sometimes a single hook (a triangle is better) with a leaded shank is used. By means of a baiting-needle, the gut of the hook is put in at the mouth and out at the tail of the bait, and the leaded shank of the hook drawn into its belly. The bait is worked with a sink-and-draw motion, and, when the trout seizes it, a few seconds are allowed for him to gorge; this means killing all fish, big and little. Far better is the drop minnow tackle invented by a member of the firm of Hardy Brothers. It is worked in exactly the same manner, but, there being two triangles in the side of the minnow, the angler strikes immediately the fish seizes the bait. I have tried this tackle in rapid streams with much success. It is quite as killing as the spinning minnow. Above the two triangles is a fixed single hook, which catches into the tail of the bait. I am inclined to think the tackle would be more useful if this hook were adjustable like a lip-hook. One tackle would then fit any sized minnow. Above the hooks should be 2yds. of gut. A swivel is often used, but is not required. The rod and line should be the same as for spinning.

CHAPTER IV.

LAKE TROUT.

*Habits and Haunts—Ferox and Gillaroo—Some Useful Flies—
Fly-fishing from the Shore—Management of the Boat—
Dapping with the Green Drake—Spinning, or Trolling—
The Live Bait—Worm-fishing.*



LAKE TROUT are simply brown trout or sea trout which have taken up their abode in lakes, but spawn in tributary streams. They vary principally according to their food, but the nature of the bottom has a great effect on their colouring. When trout only are found in a lake, they usually rise well to the fly; but where coarse fish are present in great quantities, as on the large Irish lakes, the fly is not much use, except when the May-fly carnival is on. Generally speaking, fly-fishing in the lakes of Scotland and Ireland is capital sport. In some lakes, myriads of small trout will be found, which may not average five to the pound; but in others, such as Loch Leven, the average will be about 1lb. a fish. In the very large lakes, well stocked with all kinds of fish, trout grow to an immense size; a few years ago, a Mr. Pepper caught one weighing over 29lb., in Lough Derg, on a pike-bait; it is an historical fish, and is always spoken of as "Pepper's trout."

There are two varieties of lake trout deserving special

mention—the gillaroo, and the ferox, or ferocious one. Gillaroos are short, thick, golden-bellied, large-spotted fish. Their flesh is redder than that of a salmon; but their chief peculiarity lies in a thickening of the stomach, which causes a lump to appear in the belly, called by ignorant persons a gizzard. This deformity is supposed to be caused by the small snails—their principal food; but I have caught hundreds of trout, evidently large snail-feeders, which had not this thickening of the stomach. Gillaroos are found in several of the large Irish lakes, in Wales, and in Scotland. Ferox are probably ordinary lake trout,* of considerable age and size, which have taken to feeding on their own kind. They fight like demons when hooked, and are almost always taken on spinning baits. They are extremely ugly.

Lake trout, so far as my experience goes, appreciate certain colours in the artificial fly infinitely more than the most artistic imitation of the natural insect. On many lakes few live flies are seen, but the trout rise splendidly to the artificial. Most districts have special patterns, and the angler will do well to be guided, especially as regards size, by what the local people use. In some lakes, large flies must be used, in others small. Sometimes the bodies cannot be too thin; at others a buzzy body is the most killing. Early in the season the flies should be larger than later on, and on dark, rough days larger than on calm days. In Wales, small flies are used; on many lakes in the North of Scotland they can hardly be too large. In Ireland, medium-sized flies are commonly used. A noted fly in the North of Scotland is the Zulu—a large, black hackle, ribbed with silver twist, with a red tail. In the South of Scotland, the Heckum Peckum† is one of the best of flies. In Ireland, clarets and olives are

* Ordinary brown trout were introduced into the Antipodes a few years back, where none previously existed. Strange to say, trout having the appearance of ferox have recently been caught there. This illustrates the extraordinary effect a change of water and food may have on trout. At the present time, our Colonial friends catch larger fish than we can boast in England. Some useful and entertaining descriptions of Colonial angling will be found in "Travel and Trout in the Antipodes" (Chatto & Windus), by William Senior, author of "Waterside Sketches," "Near and Far," &c., &c.

† Body, red wool, with silver twist; red hackle. Wing, white tip-feather from the wing of a wild drake. Also dressed with green body and black hackle.

great favourites, and a fly with fiery-brown wool or fur body, wings and hackle as nearly as possible to match, often kills better than any. In Wales, the Orl-fly (Alder without wings) is a great favourite. The Alexandra (page 46) rises trout on many lakes. There is, indeed, no end to the flies that will kill. I have given the dressings* of a few of the best—some of my own design, others collected from various sources, but all good and sure killers *if tied to the size and shape* for the particular district.

I usually tie large lake flies myself, and find that rough-bodied flies often kill better than the neatly-tied flies from the shops. The only materials needed are some teal and mallard breast feathers (the darker the better) for wings, dyed pigsw or seal fur (the latter is far better, but not always to be got—I dislike mohair), and floss silk, for the body, a few red and black cock's hackles, and fine gold and silver twist. In Fig. 57 is shown the whole process of tying a lake-trout fly. Other flies are tied in much the same way. I have only lately adopted the plan of putting the wings on first. It seems to me the easiest way, and makes a strong fly; but it is more usual to put the wings on last of all. The most useful colours for the seal fur are clarets in various shades (particularly an almost black claret), brownish reds, olive-greens, and scarlet.

Fly-fishing from the Shore can, of course, only be practised when the fish come within casting distance. Waders are often most useful. If the margin of the lake is weedy, use only one fly; if clear, two or three. The fineness of the tackle should depend entirely on the size of the fish and the weather. On rough days, coarse tackle will do; on fine, bright days, with little wind, it can hardly be too fine. The cast may be made

* 1. Body, almost black claret, with or without silver twist. Black hackle. Dark mallard wing. A favourite fly with large trout.

2. Red pigswool body, with gold twist. Teal wing. Red cock's hackle.

3. Reddish brown silk body. Woodcock wing. Coch-y-bondu hackle.

4. Strongly barred black and white teal wing and tail. Bright red hackle. Pale green body.

5. Dark green body. Grouse wing and tail. Smoky blue hackle.

6. Olive-green body. Olive hackle to match body. Mallard wing.

Most of these flies are best with a turn of gold or silver tinsel at tail. On some days they kill best if ribbed with silver or gold twist, but not always.



FIG. 57. HOW TO TIE LAKE FLIES.

1. Portion of breast-feather of a mallard, doubled, to form wing.
2. The hackle, taken from neck of a black cock.
3. Having taken two turns round hook with well-waxed silk, take two turns round wings and end of hackle (or hackle only, if wings are put on last, as is very commonly done).
4. Cut off the waste end of wings, and bind silk round shank nearly to bend of hook, where lay, under the last two turns of silk, the ends of three fibres of mallard feather (to form a whisk) and a piece of silver tinsel.
5. Take two turns of silver tinsel under the whisk, and bring the end under the tying-silk. Take one turn of tying-silk over end of tinsel. Cut off the remainder of tinsel (unless, of course, the body is to be ribbed with it), rub a little extra wax on to silk, hold end of silk in right hand, and, with the thumb and a finger of the left hand, spin or twist on to it a little seal fur or pigswool (called dubbing) of the colour desired.
6. Wind the silk bearing the dubbing round the shank, back and close to the wings, and clear the end of silk of any dubbing which may be upon it.
7. Take end of hackle in tweezers, and twist hackle a few times under wings of fly, then once in front of wings, and take a turn of silk over the end of hackle.
8. Finish off by laying the end of the silk (A) along the fly, and taking two turns of the silk at B round the neck of the fly; then pull the end A tight.
9. Cut off any untidy ends, loosen and pick out wool or fur of body, and arrange hackle with a darning-needle—the eye of which is stuck in a cork—and varnish the silk at neck of fly.

NOTE.—If gut is to be whipped on the hook, commence as in Diagram 3, but omit the wings, and lay the end of gut along the shank, first biting the end of gut to keep it from slipping. Then proceed as in remaining Diagrams, but put the wings on last of all.

up in the manner described on pages 52-54; but for this particular purpose, there is no better way of fastening on the droppers than after the little-known manner illustrated in Fig. 58, which is absolutely reliable, and enables the flies to be changed with the greatest facility. With this knot the droppers never wear out the cast.

The shore most exposed to the wind is usually the best to fish, but the difficulty, of course, is to cast out against the wind. The young angler had better place himself so that he casts out

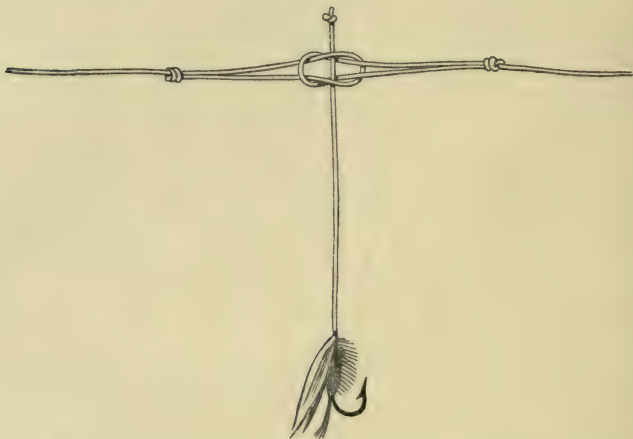


FIG. 58. A LITTLE-KNOWN METHOD OF FASTENING DROPPERS TO CASTS.

across the wind. Rocky points are sure places for lake trout, as also are the mouths of streams, particularly towards the end of the season.

As a rule, the flies should be drawn slowly across the waves—*i.e.*, neither with nor against them—and the top dropper should just skim the water; the tail fly will then sink a little. On an absolutely calm day, when the fish are rising, use only one fly, and cast, if you can, into the ripples of the rising fish. Failing this, cast, and let the fly sink almost to the bottom, then raise it up slowly. If, after due perseverance, this latter plan fails

go home. With regard to striking, it is impossible to lay down any general rules. Everything depends on the way the fish rise. Usually, if the breeze is light, the angler cannot strike too quickly.

Fishing from a Boat is delightfully simple work. If there are two anglers, each takes an end of the boat,* which drifts sideways over the best fishing-grounds. These are usually shallows varying from 3ft. to 12ft. in depth, and the more rocky the better. Many fine trout will also be found at the edge of weed and reed beds. If the wind is light, the boat will not drift too fast, but in a breeze a small stone, attached to a rope, should be towed from amidships on the windward side of the boat. When much rope is let out, the boat will travel more slowly than if the rope were short. Floating anchors are sometimes used in lieu of the stone. Take a few feet of 12in. plank, about 1½in. in thickness; make a hole at each corner. Attach a light cord to each hole, and tie the four ends of the cords in a knot, about 6ft. from the boat. Each end must be the same length. To the knot fasten a piece of rope. Nail a few pieces of lead on to one edge of the board. This will cause it to float upright in the water. The rope is fastened amidships to the boat. The flat surface of the anchor offers great resistance to the water, and so causes the boat to drift very slowly.

No special tackle is necessary for this sort of fishing; but a short rod is preferable to a long one, and a short-handled, large-hooped landing-net will be found very useful. The casts should not be made straight out from the boat, but rather to the left or right, the flies being drawn across, and not against, the waves. If the breeze is strong, draw the line very slowly, and let the wind belly out the line, and carry the flies along the water in the same direction as the boat is drifting. The angler who can manage this will catch many more fish than he who works his flies in other ways. When the ripple is very slight, the trout sometimes take the flies best if they are drawn against the

* A boat for lake-fishing should be rather beamy. Swivel rowlocks are very advisable. A stool fixed to the centre of the boat has been lately introduced. It has many advantages over the ordinary cross-seat. It is not a bad plan to put a piece of board from seat to seat, and sit on it.

ripple. When a fish rises, misses the fly, and the boat passes over him, cast behind the boat, where you think he rose, and you may get him. Lake trout are not usually shy. When a fish is hooked, see that he does not bolt under the boat. If the lake is small, and the wind light, you may have your mooring-stone nearly on the bottom, so that, when a fish is hooked, the boat may be quickly stopped (by letting out additional rope), and held in position until the fish is landed.

Dapping with the Green Drake or May-fly (see page 39) is practised on many Irish lakes, particularly those of West Meath.* The fishing lasts for about three weeks, or less; but as the flies rise earlier on some lakes than others, the angler may, by shifting his quarters from one lake to another, prolong his fishing considerably.

The necessary tackle consists of a long, light, bamboo rod, 14ft. to 18ft. in length (a grilse rod will *do*); a light, undressed silk line,† a trifle stouter than the Nottingham lines used for chub-fishing; 1yd. of the finest undrawn gut, and a No. 10 (Kendal scale) round-bend hook. Some anglers use Stone-fly tackle with two hooks (see page 66). A basket with a lid is useful to hold the flies, or a box about 9in. square, covered with a piece of fine netting, one corner of which can be lifted up to take out the flies. The flies are found on the water, on the windward shore, among the rocks, and particularly on the leeward sides of hedges which are on the windward side of the lake. The hook should be put in and out of the back of the fly, between the wings, so that the fly floats feet downward on the water. The boat should drift with the wind, and *not be checked by a stone*; and the fly should be blown along the water in front of the boat, and not be either checked or dapped on the surface. It should, in fact, imitate the movements of the natural insects, which drift across the water. On getting a rise, wait two seconds before striking.

* As to the fishing on the West Meath and other Irish lakes, I strongly advise "How and Where to Fish in Ireland," by "Hi Regan" (Sampson Low & Co.), to be consulted; it is a most necessary work for anglers who visit Ireland.

† The Irish May-fly fishermen introduce a length of floss silk of considerable thickness into their lines. This catches the wind, and assists in carrying out the fly; but if the line I have mentioned is used, the floss silk is not necessary.

When the water is rather rough, two flies on the same hook may be used. Success depends, in a great measure, on keeping the fly on the water, and the fly only, the gut being altogether in the air. A beginner will be obliged to let a few inches of gut touch the water; but not so the practised hand. The wind constantly varies in force; as it increases, lower the point of the rod; as it decreases, raise it.

Spinning, or Trolling, is chiefly carried on in large lakes where the trout do not rise well to a fly. Tackle similar to, but stronger than, that described on page 71 should be used; but its strength must depend on the size of the trout. For the flight I have found nothing so good as a Chapman spinner, a good form of which, known as the "Archer," is shown in Fig. 59. The best natural baits are stone-loaches, gudgeons, and minnows;* but almost any small fish may be used. The bait may be cast out in the manner recommended for Thames trout, but it is more commonly trailed† behind a boat. The secrets of success in trailing, or trolling, are to fish over the right ground, and to let out abundance of line—50yds. or more. Of artificial baits, Devon and phantom minnows are the best. If a phantom bait has a tendency to bend in half, stuff it with cotton wool. These baits can easily be weighted by putting a few shot inside them. The two best colours are silver belly and blue back, and gold belly with brown back. In some waters a silver phantom is a very excellent bait. The size depends entirely on the state of the weather, water, and the time of year. The same rules apply to spinning-baits as to flies in this respect. The best place to spin over is the line



FIG. 59. ARCHER SPINNER.

* Natural baits may be salted, or kept in spirits of wine, or in King's Preservative. The last plan is best. The Preservative is sold at 157, Commercial Road, London

† Termed "trolling" in Scotland and Ireland, and in some few places "trawling."

where the shallow water ends and the deep begins. The largest fish feed at night. *Verb. sap.*

Live-baiting is not commonly practised on lakes. The tackle recommended for Thames trout would be the most suitable for the purpose. On some Irish lakes a live fish—usually a small trout—is hooked through both lips, and *very slowly* drawn after a boat, at the end of 50yds. of line. The pull of the boat prevents the bait getting to the bottom. Some very large trout are caught in this way. A trout should not be struck immediately he takes the bait, but should be given a few seconds to get the head of the bait, and with it, of course, the hook (which should be rather large), into his mouth.

Worming in Lakes is mostly carried on at the mouths of tributary streams while in spate. Stewart tackle (see page 68) or a single hook may be used, and, as a rule, no shots are required. The worm is cast out, but should not be allowed to remain long on the bottom, but be moved towards the angler a yard at a time. In Sutherlandshire, the Highlanders worm fish in the lakes at night off rocks, where the water is tolerably deep. They cast a worm like a fly, and, allowing it to sink to the bottom, await the bites.

CHAPTER V.

SEA TROUT.

Habits and Haunts—Some Standard Flies—Fly-fishing—Other Methods of Fishing.



SEA TROUT are now, by some of our highest authorities, supposed to be of the same species as burn trout, only varying from them in appearance by reason of their sojourn in salt water and marine diet. The latest experiments at Howietoun prove most conclusively that neither by colour nor form can the young of burn trout be distinguished from the young of sea trout during, at any rate, the first eighteen months of their existence.*

The life-history of sea trout very much resembles that of salmon given, at sufficient length for the purpose of this book, on pages 3 to 5. Local names of sea trout will be found on page 6.

Sea trout are very like salmon in shape and general appearance, but they may be distinguished from the "king of fishes" by having about as many X-shaped spots below the median line as above it. In the salmon, nearly all these spots are above the line. The median line runs from about the centre of the gills to the tail, and will be easily recognised in the engraving of a Loch Leven trout given in this book.

* See the *Field*, Sept. 22, 1888, page 434.

Sea trout abound in many of the Scotch and Irish rivers, but are found all round our coasts. In my opinion, they afford better sport, relatively, than salmon, provided they are not hooked on salmon-tackle, when, of course, they may be hauled out. They vary in size in different districts, but 1lb. is a fair average size, and 4lb. a very good fish. In some of the rivers on the West Coast of Ireland the average is very much higher than this, and immense bags are sometimes made. An Irish friend of mine, the Rev. Henry Henn, while fishing there for salmon, caught in one day forty sea trout, weighing just under 70lb. I would warn my readers against visiting even the most noted sea-trout rivers during dry weather, or, at any rate, before there has been a flood enabling the trout to push up into fresh water. Lakes connected with the sea by a short river often afford the best sea-trouting, but they will be found absolutely void of fish until there has been a spate of sufficient magnitude to enable or induce the fish to leave the sea. Generally speaking, sport is more uncertain and dependent on the weather in the small streams than in the large ones.*

Light salmon-tackle is frequently used for sea trout, but it is far pleasanter to fish with the still lighter tackle used for brown trout of large size. Moreover, fine tackle always gives the best results, unless it is too fine to hold the fish. Two or three flies are commonly used, and they may be attached to the cast in any of the ways already recommended, that shown at Fig. 58, on page 80, being, perhaps, the best. Or the fly may be looped on (Fig. 39, A) in the centre of the "buffer" knot (Fig. 68). Be very sure, by frequent examination, that the knots, gut, casting-line, &c., are sound and strong, for when sea-trouting there is always the chance of hooking a salmon. On this account it is as well to have 80yds. to 100yds. of line on the reel.

The Flies for Sea Trout are not usually imitations of the natural insect. Any of the salmon-flies (particularly the Jock

* Dr. Hamilton, in his well-known book "Recollections of Fly-fishing for Salmon, Trout, and Grayling," states that in some rivers on the West Coast of Scotland capital sport may be had with the fish in the tidal pools, when the tide is low, but flowing; while in others nothing will induce a sea trout to rise until he is well into fresh water.

Scott and the Blue Doctor) mentioned in this book, tied small, are good; but in some rivers the fish will only take large salmon-flies. On other streams, again, small brook-trout flies are used; and should, at any time, the fish rise short, I strongly recommend a change to smaller flies. On the vagaries of sea trout in different streams the angler must, of course, obtain local information, to which he should not, however, trust too implicitly. The Irish flies are sober-coloured patterns, something after the nature of March Browns, and quite unlike the Scotch patterns; yet I have found them kill in Scotland quite as well as the local flies. A particularly good fly is a large Wickham's Fancy, and a large March Brown is also very killing at times. Both Black and Red Palmers kill well on the West Coast of Scotland, and a fly known as Green and Teal* is killing almost everywhere. Most of the brighter-coloured lake-flies are good for sea trout, particularly the Dark Clarets with silver tinsel. Then there is the favourite fly† of the late Francis Francis, and a host of others, the dressings of which are to be found in "A Book on Angling."

When fly-fishing for sea trout in rivers, many anglers work their flies as if they were fishing for salmon. Personally, I adhere to no rule, more often than not, perhaps, casting across the stream, and drawing my cast back with the top dropper just dancing and bobbing along the surface. That method usually answers as well as any other; but when one style of working the fly fails, another should be tried. Some days the fish seem to like the fly worked fast; at other times the flies kill best if worked slowly, and allowed to sink. In rivers the fish will be found in long stretches of water which are neither very deep nor very rapid. They will also be found on the shallows at the tails of pools; but in pools near the sea, in deeper water. In lakes, the best spots are nearly always on the edge of weeds, off rocky

* Body, baize-coloured pigswool. Wing, teal, with a few strands of jungle-cock and red feather, and tail jungle-cock.

† Tail, a short tuft of orange-yellow floss silk [or seal fur.—J. B.]. Body, a dark ruddy brown or brown-red (something the colour of dark red hair) pigswool, fine silver twist. Hackle, coch-y-bondu (red with black centre). Wing, two strips of bright teal. Three sizes of this fly should be kept, from the largest to the smallest sea-trout size.

points, and about islands. The fish usually go in shoals; and having found a large shoal of rising fish, it is as well to keep the boat back, and not drift over them. The flies should be drawn rather quickly. If the fish seem very shy, try letting out 40yds. of line, and trailing the flies after the boat.

Among other methods of taking sea trout, the principal is worming both in clear and thick water. The process differs in no material respect from worming for brown trout already described on pages 69, 70. In thick water, large worms, or two or more small ones, should be used. The anglers of the North and Border catch many sea trout in rivers by casting the worm at night. Spinning is much practised, and sea trout will take a small Devon, or other swift-spinning bait, greedily (see page 71). But why spin for such a free-rising and sport-giving fish?

In the North and North-west of Scotland sea trout are often caught in the sea-lochs.* The best bait is a sand-eel, mounted on a Chapman spinner; but the fish are also to be caught with a worm, cast and worked with a sink-and-draw motion, and occasionally with a fly. The best place for the two latter methods is in quite shallow water, close to the edge of seaweed which fringes the rocks. Very full information on this subject, for which I cannot now afford space, was given in two articles of mine published in the *Field* on November 12, 1887, and March 3, 1888, entitled respectively "Sea-trout Fishing in Salt Water" and "Sea Angling in the North of Scotland." Spinning with the sand-eel is carried on very successfully during the month of June in the Kyles of Durness and Tongue, in Sutherland; but sea trout will take baits in many other sea-lochs on the North and North-west Coasts of Scotland, and, doubtless, elsewhere.

* Mr. Anderson Smith, in "Benderloch," one of the most pleasing books on natural history I have ever had the pleasure of reading, tells how the sea trout come into the sea-lochs of the North of Scotland to feed on the herring-fry. At such times I would suggest their being fished for with a large Alexandra fly, with two strips of white feather in the wing, which is a very good imitation of a small herring. In Orkney, the best fly to use in salt water is dressed with a fiery-brown cock's hackle, tied Palmer fashion, with or without grey-speckled wing. It is supposed to imitate the sandhopper. Another good salt-water fly has a pale blue body, with red tip and teal wing.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THAMES TROUT.

*Habits and Haunts—Some Likely Flies—Fly-fishing—Spinning
—Live-baiting—A New Tackle.*



THAMES TROUT grow to a great size, and much resemble salmon or sea trout in colouring. Specimens over 20lb. in weight have been taken, and a season rarely passes without the capture of one weighing 10lb. or 12lb. It is illegal to kill them under 16in. in length. Owing to the vast numbers of what I may term foreign trout which have been turned into the river, the angler may catch five foreigners before he brings to creel one native. But there is no doubt that the trout introduced into the Thames from Guildford, Howietoun, High Wycombe, and other places, in time put on silver livery and lose their red spots. Trout, I am glad to say, are, without doubt, steadily increasing in the Thames, and in the course of a few more years the fishing should be very good indeed. An association which I formed some years ago for the preservation of a portion of the river has turned in not less than 100,000 trout, varying in size from fry to fish of 2lb. Of course, the great majority of these were fry which, in my opinion, were far too small to turn into a river like the Thames. Trout are found in all parts of the river, but are most numerous in what I may term the Middle Thames, between Pangbourne and Maidenhead.

Trout-fishing begins on April 1st, and ends on August 31st. Most fish are usually caught in April and May, and in June if the water is not very low and bright. There is no time so favourable as when the river is a little above summer level and slightly coloured. At the commencement of the season the majority of trout are in the quiet reaches, but as the year advances most of them come up into the weirpools. At the same time, trout may be looked for all through the season under hollow banks where the bottom is of gravel and the stream swift, round about islands, in ballast-holes, on shallows, at the mouths of brooks (particularly towards the end of the season), and in any quiet nook or corner where the water is not too stagnant. In the evening, a good many fish leave the deeps to feed on any quiet shallows which are out of the way of the river traffic, but the very large trout do not often come into very shallow water.

Trout-fishing in the Thames is decidedly uncertain work, but the anglers who fail usually do so from lack of either skill or persistence. Given the skill, the secrets of success when fishing places other than weirpools consist in finding out the haunts of a fish, noting the times when he feeds, and fishing at those times. A man taking a chance day on the Thames has small chance of success unless he sticks to the weirpools or employs one of the professional fishermen to show him where the fish are. I believe I am correct in saying that though the weir and mill pools are more fished than any other part of the river, more fish are taken from the main stream and backwaters. Under favourable circumstances, a clever Thames angler, guided by an honest and observant fisherman, will often take his brace of trout, of perhaps 3lb. or 4lb. each, and on occasions will double or treble that take. At the same time, the number of persons who fish for weeks without taking a trout is considerable. Thames fishermen usually charge 8s. to 10s. a day, and for this provide punt, baits, and tackle, if required. They expect their dinner and beer in the bargain.

Fly-fishing for Thames Trout is not a good method of getting at the large fish, which do not feed on flies. The only

likely way of catching a trout over 2lb. with the fly is to use a good-sized salmon-fly (a Dusty Miller is as good as any; see Chapter IX.) in the rough water of milltails and weirpools. Now and again a large trout takes a small fly; but it is the exception that proves the rule. The small fish rise well enough; I once took thirteen without moving my boat; none were over $\frac{3}{4}$ lb., and all were, of course, returned. The fly was a small Coachman.

For waters less rough than those I have mentioned, there is no fly better than the Alexandra (see page 46), which will, indeed, take well in almost still water, if allowed to sink, and then drawn slowly through the water. On warm summer evenings, when the trout visit the shallows below weirpools to feed, ordinary flies may be used, but they should be dressed large. The best are Alders, Coachmen, Sedges, Coch-y-bondu with harl body and gold twist, and many lake, sea-trout, and grilse flies. A description of fly-fishing will be found in previous chapters.



FIG. 60. THAMES
SPINNING FLIGHT
(BAITED).

Spinning for Thames Trout is carried on in a similar manner to spinning for pike, but the tackle is finer. The usual flight is shown baited in Fig. 60. The fourth triangle is not necessary to hook the trout, but it helps to keep the bait in position. A single hook will do as well. The engraving was made from a tackle baited with a bleak, by W. Parrott, of Henley, a veteran Thames fisherman. The gut should be of medium size, round and clear. The lip-hooks should go through the under lip first, as a rule; but if a gudgeon, through the top lip, downwards. The bait must not "wobble" in the least, but flash straight through the water like a thread of silver. Many anglers prefer the Francis flight (see Fig. 61) to the arrangement just mentioned; but I would advise those who are particularly clumsy in the matter of arranging a spinning bait, to use either a Chapman spinner with silver-plated fans, or the Imperceptible Spinner referred to on page 73. The trace

should consist of 5ft. of moderately stout gut, tied together with the knot shown on page 109, terminated by a small loop at one end, for attachment to the reel-line, and a large loop at the other, to which the flight is fastened. Three feet from the large loop should be some such lead, with brass swivels, as that shown on page 71. The lead should always hang below the level of the line, whatever its shape may be. Very small leads should be used in the open stream, but in the heavy waters of weirpools and milltails as much as



FIG. 61. FRANCIS
FLIGHT.

a $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. lead may be necessary. The angler should put just enough lead on to keep the bait 1ft. or 2ft. below the surface. For casting from the reel, a Nottingham reel (see page 19) and line may be used; but as the greatest accuracy is often required when spinning for trout, I think the Thames plan preferable. The rod should be long, light, and of bamboo, with a greenheart top; and it will be pleasant to use if fitted with the rings, &c., illustrated on page 16. The butt should terminate with a large, soft, indiarubber knob. The leading London tackle-makers keep excellent Thames spinning-rods, and Mr. Bambridge, of Eton, makes them a specialty.

The best baits are bleak or small dace in the spring, and when the water is more or less coloured; but in bright water a *small* gudgeon or stone-roach is very killing, and in July a minnow often takes better than anything else. Flights for minnows are described on page 72. Of course, small baits can and should be mounted on finer tackle than large ones; but in the rough water of weirpools fairly stout gut may be used with impunity, and is often necessary to hold large fish in such dangerous places.

Spinning for Thames trout requires a good deal of practice. Line should be pulled off the reel on to the floor of the punt, and the bait cast out across and rather up stream, and then be brought back to the angler, and *kept continuously*

spinning by alternate pulls of the rod and draws of the line through the rings with the left hand. The line should pass over the finger of the right hand holding the rod. In the Nottingham style, the cast is made off the reel, which is checked at the end of the cast, or when a fish is running, by a finger placed lightly on the rim of the reel. The two methods are explained at considerable length in "*Angling for Pike*." When fishing in rapid-running water, the bait may be pulled slowly, and the line worked into the palm of the left hand. For the Nottingham method, the line should not be dressed, but for the Thames style a dressed line is necessary.

When fishing weirpools, it should be borne in mind that trout will be found near the lasher up to about two o'clock, but after that work out into shallower water at the tail of the pool. When the water is thick, the bait should be spun over shallows, and as near the bank as possible. To stand on the top of a weir is a mistake; the body is outlined against the sky, and the fish see it. It is usually far better to fish from a punt. In April and May, the weir-fisher will occasionally find his bait taken by large barbel and chub.

Of artificial spinning baits, I give the palm to the Devon, but the light quill minnow, which can be cast like a fly, is occasionally very killing (see page 74). Finally, as to spinning, let me say that the Thames fishermen are the best spinners in the world, and that a beginner in the art cannot put himself under better masters!

Live-baiting for Thames Trout is, I am sorry to say,

getting a common practice. The tackle consists of a fine, undressed silk line, a very small float, 2yds. of fine but sufficiently strong gut, and, if the bait is a minnow, a single hook, to be put through both lips; if it is anything large, a small lip-hook, and a triangle, which is placed near the back fin. In lieu of the ordinary



FIG. 62. A NEW TRIANGLE.

triangle, I prefer a small edition of one I invented for pike-

fishing (see Fig. 62); it lies very close to the bait, to the side of which it should be fixed. In live-baiting, the chief skill is in playing the trout, for the angler has only to moor his punt some 30yds. above the spot where a trout is known to feed, let his bait float down to the spot, and await results. The bait should be about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. below the float. An excellent plan is, after the punt is moored, to let down the bait some yards below where you believe the trout to be; then, when he comes on the feed, to reel in the bait to where he is seen chasing the small fry. I am speaking, of course, of trout the haunts and feeding-times of which are known.



CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAYLING, UMBER, OR OUMER.

Habits and Haunts—Flies—Dry and Wet Fly-fishing—The Grasshopper—Swimming the Worm.



IF in a trout-stream you catch a fish having the fatty or adipose fin, but differing in almost every other respect from trout and salmon, call it grayling without hesitation. In addition, you will note a huge dorsal fin, violet-coloured and purple-spotted; peculiar eyes, with pear-shaped, indigo pupils; head and back a purple-black, shading to a steely blue; golden streaks and grey lines (hence, perhaps, its name) on the side, with (usually) black spots; and a small mouth, having a projecting upper lip. The fish may look to you like a very beautifully-coloured yet somewhat grotesque dace. Grayling are not nearly so widely distributed as trout,*

* The largest are found in the Hampshire and Wiltshire rivers, notably the Test, Itchen, Avon, and Kennet, where they grow to 4lb., or even more, in weight. The principal English rivers, besides those mentioned, are, says Dr. Hamilton, the Lug, Wye, Irton, and Arrow, in Herefordshire; the Teme (where yearling fish are termed "pinks," and second-year fish "shutts," "shots," or "sheets"), Clun, and Corve, in Shropshire; the Trent, Dove, and Wye, in Staffordshire; the Dove and Wye, in Derbyshire; the Dee, in Merionethshire; the Derwent, Ouse, Wharfe, and Wiske, in Yorkshire; and the Eden and Esk in Cumberland. They are said to be found in the Orkneys (contradicted in the "Field," Oct. 13th, 1888), but have only been introduced into other parts of Scotland (viz., the Tweed, Ayr, and Clyde) in recent times. In Ireland, grayling are wanting and wanted. In parts of Ireland grilse are termed grayling, and in the markets of the Midlands pollan, an Irish lake-fish, is sold as Irish grayling. (*Vide* "Angling for Coarse Fish," page 127.)

and it is usually impossible to say, until the experiment has been tried, whether a river is or is not suitable for these fish. One thing we know is necessary—pure water.

Small grayling are in condition all the year round; but the spawners (those two years of age and upwards) are only at their best from August to February. Spawning in the spring, they afford the fly-fisher sport during the autumn and winter months, when trout are out of season. They are not such good eating as sea trout, but when in condition are, in my opinion, superior to the majority of brown trout. While they do not play with the dash of a trout, they nevertheless die very hard, and give most excellent sport. Generally speaking, they are, when feeding, easier to catch than trout; but when much fished for, particularly in chalk-streams, they get very shy.

Haunts and Habits of Grayling.—Except that in the North the large fish are not often found on shallows, nor any, large or small, in the roughest water, grayling may be looked for in all parts of a river. In Hampshire streams they may be seen rising like trout, and are commonly fished for with a dry fly; and those shallows which are 1ft. to 4ft. in depth often afford the best sport. In more rapid and undammed rivers, the best places are the lower edges of deep pools, where the water swirls round; under banks, where the water is fairly deep and rapid; the sloping banks on the edges of deep, swift streams; and particularly in long stretches of the river between two pools, where the water is 3ft. to 4ft. deep, and neither very slow nor very rapid. Generally speaking, grayling haunt quieter water than trout, and especially favour the smooth glides before or after a strong stream.

Grayling do not, like trout, swim near the surface when inclined to feed, but dart perpendicularly from the bottom, seize the fly, and instantly descend. They are enabled to do this by means of a large air-bladder, which, so Dr. Hamilton has discovered, works in connection with the back fin. When the fin becomes erect, the bladder at once fills up with air, and the fish rises to the surface; when it lies over, the bladder immediately gets smaller, and the fish drops to the

bottom. Grayling feed best in morning and afternoon during the summer, and about mid-day in winter. On some rivers the large fish hardly ever take the fly, and in the North fly-fishing gives place to "swimming the worm" from the end of October till after Christmas; and in the Midlands it is practised throughout the winter, should the weather be sufficiently genial.

Fly-fishing for Grayling much resembles fly-fishing for trout. On the Hampshire rivers grayling are caught with the floating fly, but the wet fly by no means fails to take them. Mr. Halford gives me the following as being the best Test grayling-flies: Wickham's Fancy (see page 32), which is always useful; the Red Tag* and Orange Bumble,† killers in any stream; and the Adjutant Blue.‡ These are fancy flies; but imitations of the natural flies, especially the Duns, are very killing. A pale-winged Dun, with an apple-green body, dressed very small, is a particularly good grayling-fly. Mr. T. E. Pritt, author of that beautiful work "The Book of the Grayling"—where will be found Mr. Walbran's and other accomplished anglers' pet casts—gives as his favourite flies for Yorkshire and the Midlands the Crimson Tag,§ Dark Needle,|| and Fog Black¶ (see Fig. 63). In Derbyshire, the Bumbles are, of course, great favourites; and I may remark generally, as to fancy grayling-flies, that they are always the better for a little bit of colour and tinsel. Grayling occasionally rise well to the May-fly, but when that occurs, having recently spawned, they should be returned to the water.

* Hackle, blood-red gamecock. Body, copper-coloured peacock harl, two or three strands twisted together (or a single strand of blue and yellow macaw tail-feather). Tag, ibis, or scarlet seal fur, or scarlet wool. Hook, 0 or 00.

† Hackle, honey-dun cock. Body, orange floss silk, ribbed with a strand of peacock sword-feather, and with fine flat gold. Hook, 0 long or 00 long.

‡ Wings, medium starling or pale coot. Body, a strand from the pinion or tail-feather of an adjutant (or strip of quill from pinion-feather of an oldish starling). Hackle and whisk, blue Andalusian. Hook, 00 or 000. The strand of adjutant is stripped on one edge only, by tearing down the longer flue with the thumb and forefinger of the left hand.

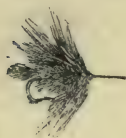
§ Hackle, bronzy feather from golden plover's breast (in full plumage). Body, bright green peacock's harl, dressed full. Tag, crimson wool.

|| Hackled with feather from darkest part of brown owl's wing.

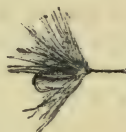
¶ Wings, bullfinch's wing. Body, dark purple silk, dubbed with dark heron's harl. Legs, from neck of starling.

The rod and tackle for grayling are the same as those used for river trout, but the gut near the fly must be very fine. I never use more than two flies, and in quiet, clear water often do best with only one. On the subject of dry-fly fishing there is little to add to the remarks in Chapter II. The great point is to distinguish a rising trout from a rising grayling. The trout will keep near the surface, and may often be seen, while the grayling keeps near the bottom, except just at the moment of rising. The grayling often shows his back fin when he takes the fly, and Dr. Hamilton tells me that two or three bubbles are nearly always left after a rise. I have not noticed this myself.

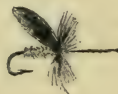
In wet-fly fishing it is usual to cast right across the stream, and allow the flies to *slowly* sweep round. Strike quickly and



Crimson Tag.



Dark Needle.



Fog Black.

FIG. 63. CAST OF GRAYLING-FLIES FOR NORTH-COUNTRY STREAMS.

delicately at the least indication of a rise, and play the fish very tenderly, as he has a mouth from which the hook easily comes away. If he rises, but misses the fly, still go on casting. A grayling will sometimes rise short half a dozen times, and at last get hooked. In rather still water, which you would not dream of fishing for trout, let the fly sink well, and strike at the slightest movement in the water or tightening of the line. Never cast up stream with the wet fly for grayling. In the autumn and winter, do not lose heart and go home because you have no rises; the fish may begin to feed at any moment, and in one short half-hour you may retrieve the fortunes of the day.

Bait-fishing for grayling should only be practised on streams where the large fish absolutely refuse a fly, or in

the North, after the middle of November, when fly-fishing becomes useless. Grayling take almost any grub or larva, but the two baits most used are gentles and worms. On Herefordshire and Worcestershire grayling-streams an odd method of fishing is practised with what is termed the "grasshopper"* (Fig. 64). On to the point of the hook stick half a dozen gentles. A stout cast is generally used. A tiny quill float, not sufficient to buoy up the leaded bait, is fixed to the line, to show the angler about how deep the bait—which should reach the bottom—is in the water. The "grasshopper" is cast in likely spots, and worked with a sink-and-draw motion near the bottom. In lieu of gentles, a real grasshopper, redworm, or cabbage grub, may be used.



FIG. 64. THE GRASSHOPPER.

"Swimming the Worm" is a method greatly practised in the North after the fly-fishing is over. It is most successful in cold weather, particularly after frosty nights, when the water is low and clear; but the presence of snow-broth in the stream is usually fatal to success. The tackle consists of a very fine 3-yd. cast, terminated by a small round-bend hook, the shank of which should be painted red, and which, if not "sliced," should have a bristle lashed on to it, to keep the worm from slipping down. A swan-shot is fixed to the line, about 1ft. from the hook. The gut passes through a tiny cork float, not much larger than a cob-nut, which is kept in its place by a peg. The peg should project about 1½ in. above the float, and be painted red. *Small*, well-scoured redworms are the best baits, but brandlings will do. A rather stiff fly-rod and dressed line are commonly used, but I should give the preference to a Nottingham rod, reel, and line. All being prepared, fix your float so that, as nearly as you can guess, the bait will be 6 in. from the bottom, and cast the tackle into likely grayling-haunts, letting it swim down with the stream. Sometimes you may walk along the bank and

* It is made thus: Wrap lead round shank of hook, and over lead wind green Berlin wool, with a few turns of black wool at head. Lay a straw along each side, and rib with yellow wool or thick silk.

follow it. At the *slightest* check to the float, strike gently. If the fish bite shyly, substitute Stewart tackle for the single hook. Swimming the worm is described very fully, and the tackle is illustrated, in Mr. Pritt's book, but in these few remarks all the essential points are noted. Grayling sometimes take a minnow, but not often.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAR, CHARR, OR CHARRE.

Habits and Haunts—Fly-fishing—Spinning—Fishing at Night with the Worm.



CHAR* are lake-fish, and thrive best in still, deep waters of a low temperature. In appearance they much resemble trout, but are more gorgeous in colouring, particularly just before spawning, when their bellies become a bright crimson or scarlet—hence their Welsh name, *torgoch*, which means red-belly. The front edge of the dorsal, ventral, and anal fins, and upper edges of pectoral fins, are often a pure white or orange colour. The eyes are golden, and the back a bluish purple, tinged with gold. Should there be any difficulty in deciding whether a fish is a trout or a char, examine the roof of its mouth. If a trout, you will find a double row of teeth running down the central bone, or vomer. If a char, there will only be a few teeth, which will be found in the more forward part of the bone. Char are found on many lakes of the United Kingdom, but vary greatly in their habits in different waters. In Scotland, they rise best to a fly in Loch Doon, Ayrshire; Loch Achilty, Ross-shire; Loch Knockie, Inverness-shire (in October); the Tarff, Kirkcudbright (late in

* For many particulars in this chapter relating to char I am indebted to Dr. Day's "British and Irish Salmonidæ."

the season); Corry Lair; and in Lochs Dochart, Ericht, and Fruchie. They are found in a number of lakes, large and small, in Ireland, and in the smaller lakes will sometimes rise to the fly. In Lough Conn a char was once taken on a salmon-fly. In Wales, char take the fly freely, but in the Cumberland and Westmoreland lakes they do not come much to the surface, or into shallow water, except when spawning. They are said to take the fly in Goat's Water and Hawes Water. The average size of this fish is something under $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. One of the largest ever taken was caught on a spinning bait, last year, in Windermere, by Mr. Higham, of Bowness; it weighed 2 lb. 1 oz. Besides torgoch, char are termed gally-trout, red-wame, and murneen. These fish are excellent eating, and potted char is a well-known delicacy. At Howietoun, char have been successfully interbred with trout. The offspring are not sterile, as might have been expected.

For fly-fishing, very fine tackle should be used, and there may be three, or even four, flies on the cast. The flies should be drawn slowly, and the rod-point kept low, so that they sink a little below the surface. Indeed, a shot or two to sink the flies may sometimes be added with advantage. Char, when inclined to rise, are not very particular in the matter of flies. Ordinary lake-flies, dressed small, are commonly used. A Red Spinner, with gold twist, I have known kill in Ireland; and, generally speaking, a little gold twist or tinsel, and a bit of colour, are advisable. Mr. H. R. Francis, a veteran fly-fisher, says the following fly has special attractions for char. It is a variation of one of Mr. Colquhoun's flies: Bright red land-rail wing, yellowish red hackle and body. There should be a second hackle, with some fine gold twist, carried Palmer fashion down the body. When the fish will not take the flies cast in the usual manner, the cast should be shotted, and trailed very slowly after the boat at the end of a long line.

Spinning for char is much practised on Windermere, where the local fishermen use a contrivance known as a "plumb-line." The angler should use ordinary brook-trout spinning tackle (see page 71), and for bait a Devon, quill minnow, or blue

phantom. A very heavy lead (1oz. or more) should be put on the trace, $1\frac{1}{2}$ yd. from the bait, which should be trailed slowly at the end of 50yds. or more of line. If it is cast out in Thames fashion, it should be allowed to sink well before being drawn in. If sport is not obtained, try lighter or heavier leads until your bait is at the right depth. This difficulty of finding the depth may be got over by the plumb-line already referred to. This tackle consists of a strong cord, about 50yds. in length, which carries five baits. At the end of the line is a large swivel, and to the swivel is fastened a $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. lead. Attached to the line are five droppers, which vary in length from 6yds. to 10yds. The shortest are nearest the lead. To each dropper is fastened a trace with swivels, and at the end of each trace is a spinning bait, usually of metal, home-made—one side silver, the other copper. The boat is rowed slowly along, and the lead is let down over the stern. Then follows a dropper, then some of the cord, and another dropper; and so on until all the line is in the water. The heavy lead causes the main line to hang down nearly perpendicularly in the water. The resistance of the spinning baits to the water, as the boat moves along, keeps them and the traces extended clear of the cord. In March, the Windermere char are about 90ft. down in the deepest parts of the lake. They come nearer the surface in the summer. About September they come on to the shallows for spawning purposes, and are netted during the autumn. The angler should bear their changes of position in mind.

In some lakes, probably all, char take a worm well at night. The boat is moored, and the tackle—which consists of a gut cast and two small hooks, a yard above which is a $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. pipe lead—is let down a considerable depth into the water. Various depths must be tried, until the fish are found. The baits are well-scoured brandlings and redworms. The fish bite best just before dawn.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SALMON.

Habits and Haunts—Waders and Dress—Rod and Tackle for Fly-fishing—Knots—Standard Flies—Casting and Working the Fly—Striking, Playing, and Gaffing the Fish—Spinning, or Trolling—Fishing with Prawn and Worm—Trent Method of Salmon-fishing.



AT the end of the procession of game fish comes, king of all, the mighty salmon. Need I describe him? I think not. Of his life-history a brief account is given in Chapter I. More useful to the angler will be a short description of his haunts and habits, so far as they are involved in his capture. Had I some ten times the space to devote to this one fish, I could have touched upon the numberless controversies respecting his habits and the ways of angling for him; but I am here obliged to limit myself—not, perhaps, to the reader's sorrow—to the best advice I am capable of giving in the matter of tackle, and an account of the principles relating to salmon fishing which are generally accepted by the most experienced anglers of the day.

Now as to his habits and haunts. His abiding-places in rivers are usually the pools, in some of which he will never rise to a fly—why, no one knows. In this he somewhat resembles barbel. The angler who fishes a strange river will therefore lose

much time and have poor sport unless he obtains the services of a local fisherman, or gillie, to show him the pools (termed "casts," or "catches") in which salmon rise, and the best way of fishing them. Many pools contain rising fish only when the water is at a certain height—which height local anglers know well. In a flood or spate, when the fish are running up stream, a salmon may be looked for behind any rock, and local experience is then not so valuable. In large, slow-flowing rivers, such as the Shannon above Portumna, salmon are caught on the fords—*i.e.*, short pieces of the river where the water shallows somewhat—and in only a few feet in depth—spots which would be called "hills" on the Thames. The habits of salmon vary much in different rivers. In one stream they will rise in pools close to the sea; in another, not until they have put fifty miles between themselves and the sea-coast. In one river the fishing may be only good in the spring; in another, not until July. Therefore, before renting or visiting a river, make yourself thoroughly acquainted with its characteristics, or you may be greatly disappointed, and may consider perhaps with justice, that you have been swindled. In lakes, salmon will be found more particularly off rocky or other projecting points, where the water is fairly deep. A narrow gut between two lakes, where there is a gentle stream, is nearly always a favourite spot.

In the spring, the kelts (there is an explanation of names on page 6) are often a great nuisance, as they take the fly, or any bait, far more eagerly than the clean fish. In the summer months, unless the weather is very wet, the fishing is usually at its worst, and is at its best in the autumn, after the netting has stopped in the estuaries. In genial weather, the fish rise best in the morning and evening, and worst in the afternoon. Just after sundown is always a likely time. In cold weather, the fishing is best after mid-day. Fresh-run fish may be known by their silvery appearance and the presence of sea-lice. They take the fly, or bait, more eagerly than those that have been some time in the river. In the autumn, blotches of red and black spots appear on the male fish, which are then called red fish. By the way, when you hear a Scotchman

speak of a fish, you may be certain he means a salmon, as trout are not called "fish" in Scotland.

Salmon rarely take the fly in salt water; but should many fish be in an estuary, the experiment of casting a fly over them should be tried.*

Waders and Dress.—All-wool clothing, knickerbockers, thick, knitted stockings, Norfolk or other easy-fitting jacket, of a thickness suitable to the season, and stout, *well-greased* boots, form the best attire. Waders—which on many rivers are absolutely necessary—require more consideration. The ordinary thing is stockings or trousers of waterproof cloth. Over the feet, outside the stockings, are drawn woollen socks, and over these leather, or canvas and leather, shoes, called "brogues." The whole arrangement is cumbrous, and inconvenient to put on and off; and I may say I greatly favour certain combination waders made by Cording, of Piccadilly, in which the brogue and stocking or trousers are all in one piece. They are on or off in a moment. Their one fault is that the foot cannot be turned inside out, to be dried either of perspiration or any water which may have got in. When not wading, the angler should take every opportunity of turning his stockings down, to ventilate them. However, on any but a hot day, it is unwise, having once got into a profuse perspiration, to turn down wading trousers, which usually come high up on the back and chest. The danger of a chill is very great. There are wading-trousers, made by Cording, with a life-belt attached—not a bad idea for some rivers, where the bottom varies considerably and sud-

* In July, 1888, Sir John H. Morris, K.C.S.I., and some friends, fishing near Stornoway, in a bay about half a mile, or less, from the mouth of the Grimersta river, took several salmon in absolutely salt water. In consequence of continued dry weather, the salmon had been detained in the estuary for some time, and it was about ten days before they showed any inclination to take the fly. While fly-fishing for sea trout in the sea, the discovery was made that the salmon would take the fly. They took only for a week, and sixty were killed on five rods. No salmon have been caught in the place before or since. Sir John, who has very kindly given me the most exact particulars, informs me that the depth of the water where the fish were taken was 10ft. to 12ft. The weather on the first day was cloudy with a good breeze; but afterwards fish were taken on an ebbing tide with very little wind. They rose best on rising tide with a good stiff breeze. The fly used on the first day was the Wasp, on a No. 5 hook, worked deep in the water; but larger flies were afterwards used with equal success. Dr. Hamilton tells me that, in the Fleet, a piece of water on the coast of Sutherland, between Dornoch and Golspie, salmon are commonly fished for with the fly during the first few hours of the rising tide. There are many instances on record of salmon taking a bait in salt water.

denly. There are many streams where trousers are not required—I mean wading-trousers—and stockings will do, or even a pair of knee-high, waterproof boots. Of stockings, the “Norge” semi-waders are among the best; they are kept up by means of light tweed continuations, which make them look like trousers. Waders may be of thin waterproof cloth for summer use, or of stout felt, waterproofed on the outside, for spring and autumn. There is real danger in standing in icy cold water in waders intended for summer use. Therefore, when making your purchase, consider the time of year and the temperature of the water you are likely to wade in. Have plenty of nails to the soles of the brogues, which should be riveted to the sole-leather before it is fastened to the brogue. Nails which are hammered or screwed in after the sole is complete soon tumble out. It is a good plan to have two pairs of wading-trousers, and use them on alternate days; there will then be ample time for them to be dried inside.*

In deep, heavy streams, wading is sometimes only possible by means of a metal-tipped staff; but in such streams none but the young and strong should venture. Some rivers have a way of running suddenly into deep holes; therefore, on a strange stream the angler should not wade deeply without first having obtained some information from local people as to any hidden dangers there may be.

Rod and Tackle for Salmon-fishing.—The rod should be of greenheart,† 16ft. to 19ft. long, according to the purchaser's strength. For boat work, 14ft. is a sufficient length. It should be rather thicker than a Castle Connell rod at the butt, and thinner near the point; but it is very important not to have a light, whippy top. The top must be a little heavy, or it will

* Wading boots or stockings can be easily repaired by means of a solution of naphtha and indiarubber, obtainable at most of the waterproofer's. It should be laid smoothly on the leaky spot with a knife, and allowed a few minutes to partly dry. Then a piece of thin indiarubber or waterproof cloth, which has also received a coating of the solution, should be laid over the leaky spot, smoothed down with the fingers, to get out the air-bubbles, and left under at least a 10lb. weight until the following day.

† I have not the least objection to the new steel-centred, split-cane salmon-rods beyond their price. A member of the Fly-fishers' Club caught some hundredweight of salmon on one of these rods, and says it is still as good as new. It is a capital plan to have the top joint of split cane, the rest greenheart.

not lift a long line off the water. A good rod bends right from the butt when being used. The rod-fittings should



FIG. 65. TOP
RING FOR SAL-
MON-ROD.

be the same as those described on page 16, except as regards the top ring, which should be larger than the one there shown. No. 5, pattern A (Fig. 65), which has a revolving inner ring, is the best size and shape for the purpose. It is immaterial whether the joints are spliced together or fastened by ferrules. Spliced rods cast a little the best, but ferruled rods are far more convenient. The majority of anglers like a metal reel with a check; I prefer either one of the brake-reels, or a strongly-made, first quality Nottingham reel, if fitted with a check and my line-guard (see page 19). It should be at least 4in. in diameter. Though I think that reels of the Nottingham type, with large barrels,* will in time supersede all others, for every kind of

fishing, it is only proper to state that the great majority of salmon-anglers still use metal winches. The engraving (Fig. 66) was made from one of Farlow's metal winches which has a check both noiseless and adjustable. By turning the screw, the check may be lessened or increased at pleasure. Winches of this kind should be kept full (but not to overflowing) of line, which should nearly resemble that described on page 20, but must be longer and thicker—how thick I cannot say, that point depending in a great

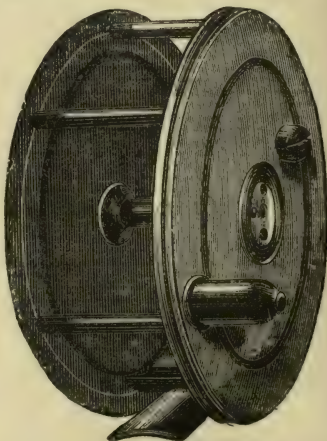


FIG. 66. METAL WINCH WITH ADJUST-
ABLE, NOISELESS CHECK.

* So much line has to be held on a salmon-reel that, unless the reel is very large indeed, the barrel may with advantage be smaller than is usually the case. Of course, the larger the barrel, the less room there is for line on the reel.

measure on the stiffness of the rod. Ninety yards of back line, and 35yds. of casting line (tapered at both ends) is not too much, except on small rivers. For salmon-lines, the dressing already given (page 20) is improved by the addition of one-third copal varnish. Lines should always be dried after use, by merely being unwound on to the floor, or on to some such line-drier as that shown in Fig. 67, which was invented by Farlow & Co.

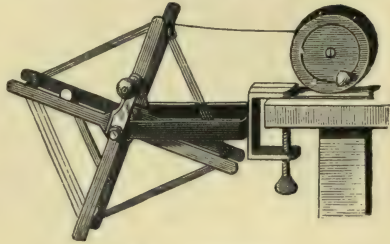


FIG. 67. LINE-DRIER.

Salmon-gut both thick and long is difficult to get, and expensive; but as it lasts a long time, it is less costly than it seems. It is difficult to improve on a 3-yd. cast of the best salmon-gut (not tapered), the strands tied with the "buffer" knot (see Fig. 68). A less troublesome (because no silk whipping is necessary) but less strong gut-knot, is given on page 22. A good and cheaper cast may be made in the following way: Take two casts of medium gut, *soak them well*, and tie them together. Hang them by the middle over a hook attached to the wall, and then separately twist each end the same way with the finger and thumb. Having twisted each end almost as much as it will bear, lay the ends together, and twist them both together the reverse way. This operation requires a little skill and care, but the result is good. I have to acknowledge my obligation to Mr. Pennell for this idea. A hank of good salmon-gut is worth taking care of. It should be exposed to the light as little as possible, and should be kept either in a sheet of pure rubber, or in a piece of wash-leather.

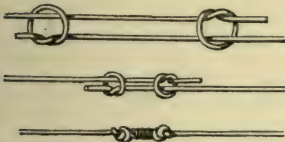


FIG. 68. THE STRONGEST KNOT FOR GUT-CASTS.

Hooks for salmon should be of the best quality; the barbs

must not be cut very deep, and the points should be straight—*i.e.*, not turned out. Eyed hooks are coming into use for salmon-flies, but I have heard them greatly abused, many anglers preferring the old-fashioned gut loop, the faults of which are that if of bad gut, or exposed much to the sun, they wear out before the fly; and that when the wax on the tying-silk perishes—as it will perish in time—the loops draw.* If eyed hooks are used, the eyes must be large, for the thick gut has to go twice through if the knot shown in Fig. 20, page 28 (which is the best for the purpose) is used. The two best eyed hooks for salmon are either the patent eyed hooks in which the eye is made of fine wire, and brazed on separately (Fig. 69), or



FIG. 69. DOUBLE-EYED HOOK WITH PATENT EYE.



FIG. 70. THE LOOP EYE.

the loop-eyed hook invented by Mr. Whitmore (Fig. 70).† There is not a great deal to choose between them. They are both very superior to the ordinary eyed hooks of commerce. Double hooks are also a comparative novelty, and much abused by old-fashioned anglers. I like them only for small flies, which they cause to swim properly. A salmon-fly which swims on its back or side is very little use. For an obvious reason, it is necessary to put more pressure on the fish when it first takes a fly on a double hook than if a single hook only is used.

* It has been suggested that salmon-flies might with advantage be tied on eyed hooks, with a loop of gut projecting through the eye. Should the gut-loop wear out before the fly, the metal eye would still remain, and the fly might be used until the feathers were worn out.

† These hooks are made at Redditch, the first-mentioned by Warner & Sons, those with loop eyes by Bartleet & Sons.

There are few special knots to mention in this chapter. The "buffer" knot for casts I have just given, the knot for eyed hooks is illustrated on page 28 (Fig. 20), and the cast may be knotted to the gut-loop of a fly according to that method. The knot for joining the cast to reel-line is given on page 23.

Before fishing, be most careful to see that the line, casts, and knots are all strong, sound, and free from defects, and that the reel—which keep well oiled—is in working order. Do not use very fine tackle for salmon, or you will most certainly lose the best fish; but finer tackle than is ordinarily used is strong enough, if there are no weak places in it. Note the thickness of the tackle commonly used on the river, and let yours be just a little finer.

With reference to bags and baskets for carrying the salmon after they are landed, I need say but little. As salmon are large fish, the bag is decidedly the most convenient, and those which expand on the principle of the well-known Freke bag are the best. As a rule, salmon-anglers have an attendant to carry the fish.

There is a little instrument, invented by Mr. Alfred Jardine, which should be of considerable service to salmon-fishers. It is a gag to keep the fish's jaws well apart while the hook is being extracted. For pike-fishing it is invaluable, and has recently been made in small sizes for other fish. Bearing in mind that-salmon flies, which are costly things, frequently get badly mauled while being extracted from the fish's mouth, I should decidedly call this salmon-gag an economical invention.

Of cases and books for salmon-flies an endless variety is kept in the tackle-shops. A box which is intended as a storage place for flies should certainly be made of tin, with a closely-fitted lid, to keep out moths and other insects. Never expose salmon-flies to the light, except when they are being used. The sun fades the colours—hence the folly of carrying them on one's cap. A tarnished silver or gold body may be revived by scraping with a knife, or rubbing with a pointed piece of hard wood and plate powder. The colours of the feathers may sometimes be renewed, if the fly is touched up with Judson's dyes, applied by means of a camel-hair brush.

Moths are ruinous to feathers; therefore, keep spare flies in a tin box in which is a pill-box, with perforated lid, containing some substance obnoxious to moths, such as naphthaline crystals. To destroy moths' eggs, sprinkle the flies with benzine collas or chloroform, by means of a scent-spray. I am indebted to my friend Mr. H. Keily for this idea.

Salmon-flies represent no flies known to naturalists, but are probably taken by the fish for—but no, I will not go into that question further than I have on page 2. The present fashion is to use gaudy flies. Our fathers used very sober-coloured patterns, and seem to have killed as many salmon as we do. Colour is *rather* important in a salmon-fly, size *very* important. In spring and autumn the fresh-run salmon will take larger flies than they will in the summer; and in autumn, the fish which have been some time in the river are only to be tempted with small flies. In still water, use a much smaller fly (sparsely dressed, and not over-winged) than in rapid streams. Beginners nearly always use too large flies, and rarely provide themselves with small ones. On the Shannon, Tweed, and other large, swift-flowing rivers, gaudy flies, 3in. in length, are often used in the spring. These large lures are little or no use in small rivers; but if a river is deep, an attractive fly is required, and of all colours, red and black are the two which are most easily seen through any considerable depth of coloured water. On sunny days, when the water is clear, use light-coloured flies; but on gloomy, dark days, a dark-bodied fly is better—this, probably, because a light-coloured fly is less easily seen against the sky than a dark one. Salmon rarely see the fly from the same point of view that we do.

The most favourite fly of all is the Jock Scott* (Fig. 71),

* Tag, silver thread and light yellow silk. Tail, a topping and Indian crow. Butt, black ostrich harl. Body, in two equal parts—first, light golden-yellow floss silk, ribbed with silver thread; above and below are placed three toucan feathers, butted with black ostrich harl: second half of body, black floss silk, with black hackle run down it, and ribbed with oval silver tinsel. Hackle at throat, gallina. Wing—the under, two strips of black Turkey with white tips, two strips of bustard and grey mallard with fibres of golden-pheasant tail, peacock sword-feather, red, blue, and yellow dyed swan; the upper, two strips of mallard, and a golden-pheasant topping over all. Sides, jungle-fowl. Cheeks, blue chatterer. Horns, blue macaw. Head, black wool.

which should be kept in at least three sizes; it is useful anywhere. Blue Doctor* (Fig. 72) and Silver Doctor I would place



FIG. 71. THE JOCK SCOTT.



FIG. 72. THE BLUE DOCTOR.



FIG. 73. THE DURHAM RANGER.

next; they are simply invaluable flies. For bright, open pools, the Durham Ranger† (Fig. 73) is excellent. The Butcher‡ and

* Tag, silver thread and yellow floss silk. Tail, a topping and blue chatterer. Butt, red wool. Body, light blue floss silk, ribbed with silver oval. Hackle, light blue run down body; hackle at throat, jay. Wing, under, grey Turkey, peacock wing, golden-pheasant tail, teal, red, blue, and yellow dyed swan; wing, upper, brown mallard, and topping over all. Horns, blue macaw. Head, red wool.

† Tag, silver thread and light yellow silk. Tail, topping and Indian crow. Butt, black ostrich harl. Body, two turns of orange silk, two turns of dark red claret seal fur, the rest dark blue seal fur. Tinsel, ribbed with silver oval. Hackle, dark red claret from claret seal fur; hackle at throat, medium blue. Wing, four golden-pheasant tippets (two long and two shorter). Two junglecock feathers projecting beyond the golden-pheasant tippets, and a topping over all. Sides, junglecock. Cheeks, blue chatterer. Horns, blue macaw. Head, black wool.

‡ The Butcher is dressed thus: Tag, gold twist and orange floss. Tail, one topping. Butt, black ostrich harl. Body, two or three turns of red, ditto of medium blue, ditto of red, and the rest of blue, pigswool. Broad silver tinsel. Medium red claret hackle. Gallina on shoulder. Under-wing, a tippet and gold pheasant rump-feather; over them strips of brown mallard, bustard, peacock-wing, wood-duck; and blue and yellow swan strips. Black head.

Popham* are also first-class flies, and will kill almost anywhere.

Some dark flies should always be kept in the fly-book, for gloomy days. One of the best of these is the Black and Teal (Fig. 74), dressed according to the late Francis Francis' pattern.†

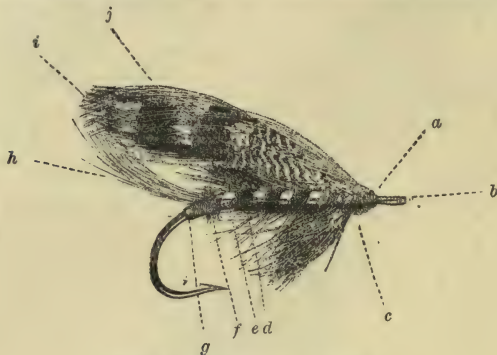


FIG. 74. THE BLACK AND TEAL.

a, Head; *b*, Gut-loop; *c*, Shoulder Hackle; *d*, Body; *e*, Tinsel; *f*, Butt; *g*, Tag; *h*, Tail; *i*, Under Wing; *j*, Upper Wing.

It is good on most rivers, and particularly the Spey and the Tay. There are two other sober-coloured flies—Western Butcher,‡ and August Brown§—for the dressings of which I am indebted

* Tag, gold thread. Tail, a topping, and Indian crow. Butt black harl. Body in three equal parts, butted with black ostrich harl; the first, orange floss silk, ribbed with gold thread, having Indian crow above and below. The middle joint, yellow floss silk, ribbed with gold thread, with Indian crow as on other joint. Third joint, medium blue floss silk, ribbed with silver thread, with Indian crow as before. Hackle, at throat only, jay. Wing—under, fibres teal, gallina, golden pheasant tail, light brown turkey, bustard, red and yellow dyed swan; upper, two strips of mallard, and topping over all. Cheeks, blue chatterer. Horns, blue macaw. Head, black wool.

† Black and Teal is dressed thus: Tag, silver twist and golden floss. Tail, one topping. Butt, black harl. Body, two turns of orange floss, the rest black (floss, horsehair, or mohair); in large flies fur is often used. Broadish silver tinsel. Black hackle over three parts of the body. Gallina (the dark feather with the large, round spots) on the shoulder. Wing, double (single in small flies) jungle-cock, with topping over them, and two good-sized teal, or slices of widgeon, or pintail, to form a body to the wing. Head, gold thread.

‡ Body, dark maroon mohair, silver twist. Wings, grouse-feather, with two strands blue macaw. Hackle, jay's wing, mixed with some few dark strands. Tail, golden-pheasant hackle.

§ Body, light brown mohair, gold twist. Wings of the gled tail or bittern. Hackle, dark brown. Very useful in full water.

to Dr. Hamilton. To these flies should be added the Dusty Miller* (Fig. 75)—which, by the way, will often rise trout in Southern streams—Parson, Thunder and Lightning, and the Wilkinson. Mr. Senior tells me he has a good opinion of the Bulldog,† a new fly invented by Strong, fishing-tackle maker, of Carlisle, which has proved most successful, not only on the Eden, but on many other rivers; and a new edition of Sir Richard,‡ brought out recently by Turnbull, of Edinburgh.

Generally speaking, flies from the foregoing list will kill anywhere, *if dressed the proper size*. If any must be omitted, I should say, leave out the Parson, August Brown, and Thunder and Lightning. Of course, you must expect gillies and fishermen, who only use



FIG. 75. THE DUSTY MILLER.

local flies, to say that they are no use. But do not believe them. At the same time, do not by any means despise local flies. Here and there are rivers in which the old, sober flies, much resembling some of those used for lake trout, kill best. As a rule, however, the flies I have mentioned, if used the proper

* Tag, silver thread and light yellow silk. Tail, a topping. Butt, black ostrich harl. Body, embossed silver tinsel, and two turns of golden-yellow floss silk at shoulder, ribbed with gold oval. Hackle at throat, gallina, with green olive under it. Wing—under, black turkey with white tip, peacock wing, golden-pheasant tail, bustard, teal; upper, brown mallard, topping over all. Sides, jungle-fowl. Horns, blue macaw. Head, black harl.

† Mr. Strong kindly gives me the dressing as follows: Tag, gold twist and ruby floss. Tail, topping and blue chatterer. Butt, black harl. Body—first half, silver oval; two toucan feathers above and below, tied in at joint, over that black harl; second half, light blue floss, ribbed with silver oval. Hackle, very dark blue. Throat, teal. Under-wing, strips of golden-pheasant tippet; over-wing, strips of black and yellow swan. Cheeks, light drake, jungle-fowl, and blue chatterer; golden-pheasant topping above. Head, black harl.

‡ Tag, silver twist and gold floss. Tail, topping, with Indian crow above and below. Butt, green peacock harl. Body, black floss silk and silver twist. Hackle, small speckled fowl. Throat, blue jay and guinea-fowl. Wings, two strips of scarlet ibis, bustard, pintail, swan, dyed yellow and blue, with sprigs of light green parrot and small bustard, and a topping. Sides, strips of summer duck. Cheeks, light blue chatterer. Horns, blue macaw, from the red bird. Head, black.

size, and chosen according to the colour and height of the water, state of the weather, and time of year, will be quite as successful as any others. Major Traherne, one of the most experienced salmon-fishers in the United Kingdom, gives, in the Badminton Library, a very short list of flies, "with one or other of which"—to use his own words—"from the beginning to the end of the season, and in any part of the United Kingdom, salmon are to be killed, if at all." The list consists of the Jock Scott, Durham Ranger, Childers, Butcher, Popham, Thunder and Lightning, Silver Grey, Lion, Captain, Black Jay, Claret Jay, Dirty Orange, Fiery Brown, and the Spring Grub. The last is a peculiar form of wingless fly, which is gradually coming into vogue: I have copied Mr. G. M. Kelson's dressing,* as given in the Badminton Library. I have not thought it necessary to give the dressings of all the flies mentioned, as any good tackle-maker can supply them.† For several of the dressings given I am indebted to Mr. Farlow, who tied the flies from which the illustrations were made.

Casting and Working the Fly.—Casting a salmon-fly is really very similar to casting a trout-fly, but the point of the rod should follow rather a bolder curve, and more time should be given between the backward and forward cast. The Spey or switch cast is very useful in salmon-fishing, and so occasionally is the horizontal cast.‡ On this matter, pages 32-36 should be

* Tag, silver twist and light blue silk. Tail, scarlet ibis and blue macaw, in married strips. Body in two sections, having three hackles (the shortest at the tag, the longest at the head). Butt, a furnace hackle, dyed orange. The first half of the body, yellow silk, ribbed with black chenille. In the centre is placed a natural blue hackle. The second half of the body, black silk, ribbed with silver tinsel; and the shoulder or head hackles, a natural coch-y-bondu, and a gallina, dyed dark orange.

† Reliable dressers of salmon and trout flies in Scotland are: W. Robertson, Glasgow; Anderson, Edinburgh; Garden or Benn, Aberdeen; Malloch, Perth; Forrest or Redpath, Kelso; Crockatt, Stirling; W. Graham, Canonbie, for the Border Esk. For Ireland, Captain Dunne ("Hi Regan") kindly gives me the following list: In Dublin, Kelly, of O'Connell Street, and Flint, of Merchants' Quay. In Cork, Haynes, of Patrick Street. In Limerick, Nestor, George Street. In Kerry, Mrs. McCarthy, High Street, Killarney. In Galway, N. Browne. For Mayo, M. Hearn, of Ballina. In Donegal, for rivers (N.W.) and L. Melvin, Erne, &c., Rogan, of Ballyshannon. For the N.E. (Bann, Bush, Neagh, &c.), Dan O'Fee, of Coleraine. For Antrim, Miss M. Fleming, of the Vow, Bendoorg, Ballymoney. For England, the leading London tackle-makers are unsurpassed; but I may mention Strong, of Carlisle; Miss Ratliffe, St. Leonard's-on-Sea; Walbran, of Leeds; Hardy Bros., Alnwick; and for Devonshire rivers, John Truman, of Chudleigh.

‡ To fish very wide pools, anglers sometimes get the gillie to walk out behind them with the fly, and, when the necessary length of line is extended, switch the fly forward. A long line can be got out by this method.

consulted. In other respects the trout-fisher must forget all he has learned on chalk or moorland streams. Little attention need be paid to the fly falling lightly on the surface, but the line should be fully extended on the water, and not fall "all of a heap." Neither cast up stream nor across, but *down and across*, as to point C in Fig. 76. Then let the stream carry the fly

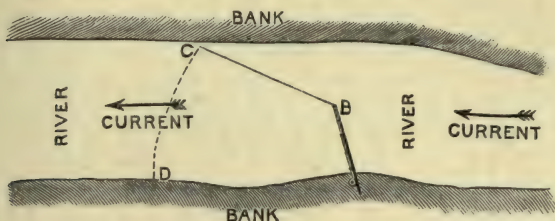


FIG. 76. HOW TO CAST FOR SALMON.

round to D, when a fresh cast can be made. When salmon lie under the opposite bank, in slack water, the force of the current in the centre of the stream will bear down on the line, and drag the fly from the opposite bank before the fish have a chance of seeing it. The only way to get over the difficulty is, just before (just after is considered the easiest by some anglers) the line touches the water, to jerk the rod a little to the right, and so cause the line to belly up stream. This plan, for which I am indebted to Major Traherne, sometimes overcomes the difficulty, and gives a fish time to seize the fly; but these eddies or slack waters on the other side of rapid streams are standing grievances to both trout and salmon anglers. On one's own side of the river they are, of course, easy enough to fish.

As the fly works round from C to D, the rod should gradually follow it; and, if you please, you may slowly lower and raise the point of the rod a few inches, which will cause the feathers of the fly to open and shut, if much line is not in the water. Many experienced anglers say that to thus work the fly is unnecessary, but it is very generally done. Perhaps the best plan is to fish a cast first without working the fly, and then, if that fails, to work it. If there is very little stream, the angler must of course

draw the fly; but in that case the water will probably be deep, and the fly will have to be well sunk. In swift water, working the fly is not necessary, but in slow or dead water I certainly think it should be worked quietly. The proper way to fish a pool is to commence at the head, and fish it foot by foot. It is often very important to sink the fly well. If the fish will not come to the fly, the fly must go to the fish, even if a shot or two has to be pinched on to the line to take it there. In very clear, deep water, salmon may often be caught by sinking the fly almost on to their noses, and then working it slowly along with alternate sinks and draws, never bringing it to the surface. If the fish are shy, try various plans: Draw the fly slowly, then fast; work it slowly, fast, and not at all; sink it, draw it near the surface—in short, tempt the fish by all the means in your power. Above all, do not leave off because the fish do not seem to be in the humour; they may “come on” at any moment. Salmon seem to care very little for the water over them being whipped, and it sometimes seems as if they could be worried into taking the fly. You need never think that, because you have cast over a pool and risen no fish, there are none in it, or at least no rising fish. Fish on, and if your fly is about the right size, you will probably succeed.

If a fish rises, and misses the fly, he should be given a short rest—about a quarter of a minute, but rather longer in swift water than where the stream is gentle. Then cast again, a little above the place where he rose, and, if that fails, try a little lower down stream. Then, if still he comes not, change the fly, and try a smaller one of the same pattern, followed by other flies of various patterns. As a last resource, leave him until the evening, and then try him again. In rather still water, I am inclined to think that, if a salmon rises short, the fly should be at once changed for a smaller one of the same or another pattern, because, in quiet waters, a fish usually comes up quietly, and can inspect the fly; therefore, if he does not take it, it may be presumed he does not like the look of it. When fishing over a pool a second time, it is generally a good plan to change the fly. Always be careful to see that the fly does not swim on its back or side. On

the size of flies, I have only to add to the foregoing remarks that in the evening a larger fly may be used than during the day.

Striking.—In swift streams, salmon more often than not hook themselves, and no strike is necessary. In quiet water, they frequently take the fly in a leisurely manner, and may spit it out unless you strike; therefore, strike, and then look out for squalls. The trout-fisher, from force of habit, may find a difficulty in *not* striking in rapid streams. When the salmon rises in fast-running water, the angler should make no movement of the rod; but when he *feels* that the salmon has the fly, he may with advantage put on, momentarily, a little extra pressure, by uplifting the point of the rod, to get the hook well in.

Playing the Fish.—Large salmon often play the angler. The vagaries of hooked salmon vary so greatly that to lay down any general rules on this subject is difficult. It is little use trying to check a fish of any size in his first brilliant rush (if he makes one). Hold the point of the rod well up, keep your fingers and clothes away from the handle of the reel, and follow the fish as best and as fast as you can. Recover your line at every opportunity, and try and keep below your fish. Do not endeavour, even with the strongest tackle, to pull his head off, or the hook may break away; but if he is making for snags, broken water, or other places where you are certain to lose him, put all the strain on him you can (but do not let point of rod get down); you may turn him, and it is no worse to break the tackle then than later on. If your salmon leap, lower the rod-point, and so slacken line, raising it again immediately he regains the water. Should a fish sulk, get below him, and try and pull his head down stream. If this fails, stone him, stir him up with poles, pass rings of metal or paper, or nooses, down the line on to his nose, and annoy him in any other manner you can think of; and if in doing so the line is accidentally cut, do not be surprised. The Americans have recently brought out an automatic gaff, which is attached to a cord, and can be passed down the line on to

the fish's nose, of which it lays hold; this is too revolutionary altogether. On strong tackle, a big fish may sometimes be played successfully with the hand when nothing can be done with the rod. Major Traherne suggests this plan with salmon; I have often noted its advantages when sea-fishing.

Landing Salmon.—The gaff should have a straight and very sharp point. One of the best is that invented by Mr. Basil Field. It has a point-protector, which comes into place automatically when the handle is closed (see Fig. 77). For gillies'



FIG. 77. GAFF WITH POINT-PROTECTOR, TELESCOPIC HANDLE, AND SLING.

use, one lashed on to an ash handle is best. Gaff a fish at the first opportunity, but never attempt it when he is struggling. Just lay the hook over him, and snatch it in with a very sharp pull.* If a very large fish, take him near the tail, for, once hooked in the tail, he is helpless, and cannot break away; however, do not lose a good chance at any part, and stand on no ceremony. Keep clear of the line. For kelts, a landing-net should be used, but I prefer a gaff for salmon. A large fish can often be gaffed ten minutes or more before he could be inveigled into a net. If a gillie holds the net, he should get a little below the angler, and sink it well; and whether he has a gaff or net, he should stand still as a statue while the fish is being brought near him. Not one gillie or professional fisherman in ten can use a gaff or a landing-net properly.

Spinning, or Trolling.—There are some rivers, or portions of rivers, in which fly-fishing for salmon is regarded as being next to useless, and spinning or bait-fishing has to be resorted to. Oddly enough, there are also a few rivers in which a

* Fish intended for the market are usually gaffed in the belly, where the wound is not noticeable.

minnow seems to have no attraction for the salmon. The best spinning baits are loach, minnows, gudgeon, eel-tail* and parr-tail. The use of the last-mentioned bait is not to be encouraged, as parr are young salmon, to kill which is illegal. For loach (or colley) and gudgeon, the best tackle is a Francis flight or a Chapman spinner (see page 83). For minnows, there is nothing better than the Dee tackle illustrated on page 72. Loach also spin well on this tackle. Natural baits are infinitely more killing than the artificial; but of these latter the best is, undoubtedly, a medium-sized phantom minnow; next to this I would place a small, shallow spoon, made of thin metal, and thickly gold-plated on the outside. A new bait, called "Swiveltail," has made a name recently, but I have not yet tried it for salmon. Another new spinner is a salmon-fly with fans at the head, which is sold by Watson & Hancock; and Hardy's Halcyon spinner (see page 75) is also spoken well of. A trace, with swivels and lead, is, of course, necessary. It need not differ materially from the trace for Thames trout described on page 92; but most professional spinners for salmon prefer lead-wire, or strips of lead, twisted round the trace, about 2yds. above the bait, to the more bulky sinker illustrated on page 71. Casting off the reel in the Nottingham style, or with a quantity of line on the ground, as in the Thames style of spinning for trout, is not commonly practised for salmon; but either of these methods might be followed with advantage where fly-fishing is useless. As a rule, the bait is trailed after a boat. In rivers where the current alone is sufficient to keep the bait spinning and off the bottom, the bait is often trailed, and the boats work from side to side, gradually dropping down stream. It has been stated, in one of the most

* It may be useful to repeat here the directions for making the eel-tail bait which are given in "Angling for Pike." Skin an eel to within about 6in. of the tail, and cut off the flesh; then cut the skin rather more than lin. above the flesh. Take a large sneek or round-bend hook, mounted on stout salmon-gut (on which is a pierced shot), put the point of the hook in at the cut end of the eel, and bring it out about 2in. from the tip of the tail; then gather the loose skin up over the shot, which is resting on the top of the shank, and tie it tightly round with thread. Next, turn so much of the skin as remains above the tie back towards the tip of the tail, and sew down the edges, so forming an artificial head. These baits can be kept in coarse, dry salt, but should be soaked before being used. This is pike-bait—for salmon it should be about half the size.

modern (and probably the largest) works on angling ever published, that salmon will not take a bait as it is being drawn in. If this were the case, the men who troll for salmon with spinning baits, on the Upper Shannon and other large streams, would never catch anything, for, in quiet waters, the minnow, colley, or gudgeon, as the case may be, has to be drawn through the water, or it would not spin. Salmon will take spinning baits whether drawn through the water or let out in rapid streams, and worked very much in the same manner as salmon-flies. If the stream will spin the minnow, the stream should be allowed to do its work without assistance; but if the stream has not the requisite power, the angler must come to the stream's assistance. In summer, spinning for salmon is little use. In the Trent, the favourite spinning baits, particularly in spring, are phantom minnows, 2in. to 2½in. in length, and golden, or blue and silver, in colour. They are worked in the deepest pools, as close as possible to the bottom. These baits are cast off the reel, which must be of the free-running, Nottingham type, and the line must be of the plaited silk, *not* dressed. With this tackle the casts are made across and slightly down stream, as in fly-fishing.

The Prawn is an exceedingly deadly bait—more deadly, perhaps, than any other. It is generally used when the water is low and clear, and fly-fishing is useless; but salmon will take it when the water is high, provided only it is clear. Prawns are usually either salted or preserved in glycerine. Before being placed in glycerine they should be boiled with a little saltpetre until they change colour, and then be laid separately on a cloth to dry. Salting is, I think, preferable. An earthen jar is three-fourths filled with prawns, on the top of which is placed as much salt as the jar will hold. Water is then poured in until all the interstices are filled up and the salt dissolved. The best prawn-tackle is that shown in Fig. 78. The needle is put in at the tail and out at the head of the bait, and the point then passed through the small loop on the shank of the lowest double hook. A few turns of red silk or thread are then taken round the tail, to make all secure. A cast of single gut, as fine as may be safely used,

should connect the prawn with the reel-line, which should be fine and dressed. There are no better rods for this purpose than those of bamboo used for trolling. They must be fitted with upright rings (see page 16). The amount of weight (split shot or twisted lead-wire) on the line must depend, of course, on the depth of the water and force of the stream. The prawn should usually be fished as nearly in mid-water as possible, and that fact must be the guide when the line is being weighted.

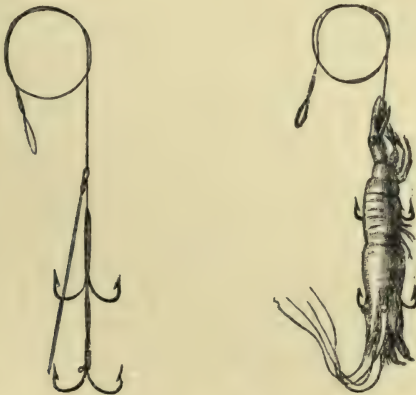


FIG. 78. PRAWN-TACKLE.

There are various ways of working prawn-tackle. It may be trailed after a boat, or merely cast across and a little down the stream, and allowed to work round, like the fly in Fig. 76; or it may be cast into pools, allowed to sink, and then worked with a sink-and-draw motion. At Castle Connell they spin it, while at Galway it is worked close to the bottom, like a worm. Generally speaking, the angler will cast out the prawn, and let it sweep round with the stream, only drawing the line if the stream is not sufficient to keep the bait off the bottom. The tackle, if the lead is heavy enough, may be cast off a Nottingham reel (in which case the line must be

undressed), or off a Malloch reel, which, as one peculiarity of this reel is to kink the line, necessitates the use of small brass swivels. Anyone who has acquired the art of collecting line in his hand (as do Thames trout-fishermen), will probably find that the pleasantest method of casting the reel only being brought into requisition when the fish is being played. With these few remarks I may safely leave the subject, first acknowledging my indebtedness for some valuable hints obtained from Major Traherne's article on the prawn in the Badminton series.

The Worm, which is not less odious to fly-fishers than the prawn, was the bait commonly used for salmon by our ancestors. Of worming for salmon I cannot pretend to any extensive experience. The usual method, carried on when the water is still thick, but clearing after a flood, which is also occasionally good for the first few hours of a rise, is to bait a large hook with three or four common garden worms of the largest size (threaded for $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in the middle of each of their bodies), and cast it into spots where salmon are known to be plentiful. The worms are cast repeatedly, and are allowed to trip along the bottom, and sooner or later a salmon may seize them. When this event happens, the fish should be given a few seconds to gorge, and if he moves off at once, line should be paid out, so that he feels no check. A weight on the line is, of course, necessary, such as a pistol-bullet or several swan-shot, placed some 2ft. or less from the bait. The weight must depend on the depth of the water and strength of the current, and the bait should be larger in very thick water than in water only slightly coloured. Salmon will also take a worm in clear water; and Mr. Cholmondeley-Pennell advocates the use of Stewart tackle, with two No. 6 or No. 7 Kendal Sneek hooks, placed $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. apart, baited with one worm. The bait is cast, and allowed to trip along the bottom, and is sunk by means of lead-wire twisted round some very fine gut, the ends of which are tied on to the cast. Then, if the lead catches in the rocks, the fine gut breaks, and the cast remains uninjured. The worm should be put straight on the hooks, which should be of stout wire; and the strike should come immediately

after the bite. The angler should keep as much as possible out of sight, and cast up stream. In fact, the process is very similar to worming for trout in clear water, described at length on pages 67 to 70. The bad point about the process is the number of fish which break away owing to the smallness of the hooks. Mr. Pennell's method answers very well in small, rapid streams, but it is not so useful in large rivers, or in pools in small, sluggish streams.

The Trent Method is the application of the well-known Nottingham style of float-fishing to angling for salmon. The float is made either of cork or from the quill of any large bird (goose or turkey); the line is moderately fine, of undressed silk, either plaited or twisted (the latter is the stronger, but does not run so freely as the former), wound on a free-running, centre balance, Nottingham reel, with or without an adjustable check. A single hook is used, about 18in. above which should be four or five swan-shot. The rod may be of bamboo cane, or one of the Nottingham barbel-rods. For deep water the float should be a slider—*i.e.*, slide on the line, but prevented from going up too far by a piece of indiarubber ring tied on to the line, so large that it prevents the float from slipping up, but so small that it will go through the rings of the rod. Mr. Francis Ley, an experienced Trent angler, and owner of some of the best salmon-fishing on the Trent, very kindly sent me a set of the tackle he uses. It is intended for deep, heavy water. On the shank of the hook (No. 16, round-bend, Kendal, or 2/0 Redditch, very stout in the wire) is whipped a loop made from the silk running line (square, solid eight-plait, undressed). This gives the bait plenty of play in the water. Above the hook, and looped to it, is 2½ft. of stout salmon-gut, knotted with the "buffer" knot; 18in. above the hook is a swan-shot, and 8in. higher another swan-shot. On the silk running line is a pipe lead of about ½oz., which rests on the knot connecting the silk line and gut. The float is of cork, about 8in. in length, tapered, and slightly curved. In ordinary salmon-rivers the lighter tackle I have mentioned is often heavy enough, but in the deep pools of the Trent very heavy tackle is required. After the depth has been found (the dis-

tance from the worm to the float should be 3in. or 4in. greater than the depth of the water), the tackle, if heavy, is cast out directly off the reel; or if it is light, loops of line are pulled out from between the rod-rings, and released as the tackle flies out. It is then allowed to swim down stream for 20yds. or more, line running freely off the reel. If the tackle is heavy, it may be necessary to slightly check the reel, for it is important to let the bait be carried by the stream a little ahead of the float, so that the worm is presented to the salmon before the gut. With light tackle the friction of the reel is usually sufficient to effect this. What is known on the Trent as "tight-corking" may be resorted to in very swift streams. Heavy weights are needed on the line, and the distance from the float to the bait should be at least 1ft. greater than the depth of the water. The float in this method is only allowed to travel down stream to about the spot the salmon are, and is then checked. On its course it has to be held well back, to cause the stream to lift the bait off the bottom. After the worm has been a few minutes in one spot, the float may be pulled back a little, and then be allowed to work a little further down stream.

The Trent angler uses the brightest maiden lobs (*i.e.*, without the ring near the head) he can find, those culled at night on a grass plat over a subsoil of marl being the best. The worms should be well scoured in moss. Two worms are placed on the hook. The hook-point is put into the head of one worm, and brought out at its middle, and is then inserted into the middle of the second worm, and threaded through to its head. Prawns worked a little off the bottom, on Trent tackle, will often kill when worms are useless. Finally, let me say that the Nottingham style of fishing is extremely artistic, and is to be by no means looked down upon because the lure is a worm. It requires, if anything, more skill than fly-fishing, and haunts of salmon which are otherwise unapproachable can often be reached by this method. Those who feel inclined to know more of this subject should read the remarks on Nottingham fishing in "Angling for Coarse Fish," where many details, for which I cannot find space

here, are given at considerable length; and should get the necessary outfit from one of the tackle-makers of Nottingham or Newark. It is not the least use to attempt to fish after this manner without the proper line and reel, and a rod with upright rings.

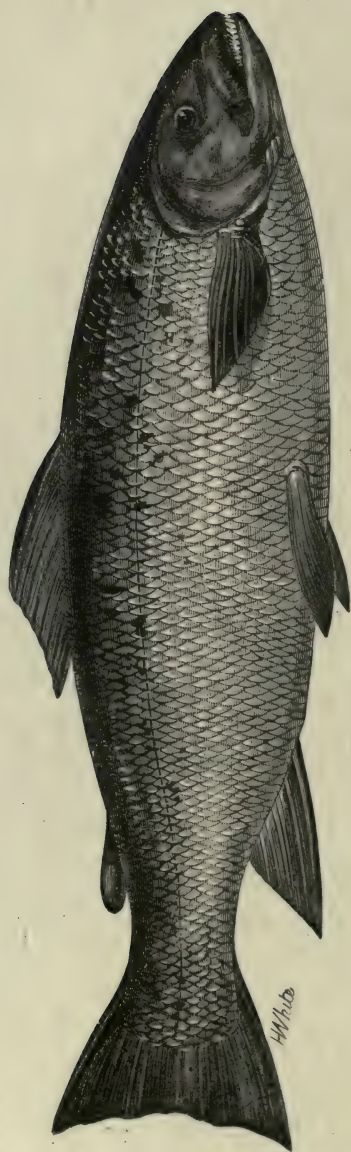
This ninth chapter of my discourse on Game Fish brings me to the end of my tether so far as salmon, trout, grayling, and char are concerned, and I will conclude by asking my fly-fishing friends to pardon my necessary references to spinning and worming, my chalk-stream readers to overlook my disquisition on fishing with the wet fly, North-country anglers to forgive so much space having been given to dry-fly fishing, and salmon-fishers not to view the book with scorn because five chapters are devoted to trout.



DIVISION IV.



ANGLING IN SALT WATER.



Angling in Salt Water.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

*Fishing for Pleasure and Profit—Advantages of Fine Tackle—
A Cure for the Supercilious Fresh-water Angler—Angling
Sometimes out of the Question.*



THOUGH angling in fresh water is of very great antiquity—as ancient, indeed, as it is delightful—not until comparatively recent years has fishing with rod and line in salt water come much into vogue, and even now the number of anglers who pursue that branch of the sport is extremely limited.

In salt water fish are, generally speaking, less difficult to catch than in fresh; but for all that, there is a right and wrong way to catch them, and he who takes the latter path had best remain at home. The sport to be obtained from sea-fish is at times first-rate, and I have not the least doubt but that there will be a steady increase in the number of anglers in salt water.

Between fishing for pleasure and fishing for profit there are many points of difference. In fishing for profit, the one thing aimed at is a great catch. Elaborate apparatus, miles of nets and lines, danger, toil, hardship, ay, loss of life—all are involved in bringing to our markets the many thousand tons of most wholesome food which kindly Nature has placed within our reach. With the angler it is very different;

he follows the recreation of the contemplative man only during the hours which he can spare from the time devoted to the more serious business of life. Angling books are written to make those hours pleasant ones.

Now as to tackle. It is a popular delusion that sea fish can be caught on anything. As the cunning trout is often—alas! too often—taken on the thick, hempen night-line of the poacher, so are sea fish caught in deep water, at *night*, by the fisherman, on the coarsest lines. But in the daytime, more especially in shallow water, moderately fine tackle becomes absolutely essential, and then it is that the angler has the great advantage. When the fish are biting fast at night, or, during the day, in the gloomy depths of the sea, the fisherman will bring into the boat three fish for every one caught by the angler, the simple reason being, that the fish can be hauled up faster on coarse tackle than on fine. The following little anecdote illustrates the advantages of fine tackle in the daytime. Self, friend, and gillie were about stepping into a boat on the shores of a sea-loch in Scotland. I had a cane rod and a paternoster, and advised my friend to bring the same; but, the gillie laughing at my tackle, and exclaiming that sea fish were never caught on a rod, he decided to fish with hand-lines provided by the man. I stuck to my paternoster, and he used two hand-lines, the gillie holding a third. The result of the afternoon's fishing was a fair take of fish, two-thirds of which fell to the paternoster, the remaining third to the three hand-lines. It was not a matter of superior skill, but merely of gut tackle as opposed to hempen hand-lines. Not only had I most sport, but it was certainly far more enjoyable playing the fish, and lifting them into the boat in a landing-net, than hauling up several fathoms of wet line, and dragging the fish on board willy nilly.

The angler should not consider sea fish as unworthy his notice by reason of the ease with which they are sometimes to be caught. If he has that idea, let him spend a week attempting to catch grey mullet. He will be completely cured at the end of that time.

Lest I should be taken to advise that fine tackle should always be used for sea fish, I may as well say here that there are occasions when, owing to the depth of water and strength of tide, strong tackle and very heavy leads become necessary, no forms of which can be better, under the circumstances, than those used by the professional fisherman. An excellent and exhaustive work on sea fishing exists in Mr. Wilcocks' "Sea Fisherman." It should be read by everyone, whether sea fisherman or angler in salt water.

These few remarks are, I think, sufficient introduction. What follows is purely of a practical nature, unexpanded by anything the least in the nature of padding, and will, I hope, prove acceptable to the reader, to whom, Good Sport!



CHAPTER II.

TACKLE.

A Useful Outfit—General Rod—Rings and Fittings—Fly-rod—Lines—Reels and Winches—Gaff-hook—Landing-net—Hooks—The Paternoster—Gut—Gimp—Knots—Modifications of the Paternoster—the Sea Leger—Heavy and Light Float Tackle—Spinning, Trailing, Whiffling, and Railing Tackle—Sundries.



THE tackle required by the angler in salt water depends, of course, on the nature of the locality, and the fish he proposes to catch. If the available fishing is in a shallow harbour, heavy leads and long, coarse lines will, of course, not be required; while, on the other hand, if the fishing is from a boat, where the water is very deep, and the tide runs strongly, light paternoster tackle may be found quite useless. Before visiting a strange place, it is as well to write to one of the local hotel-keepers or fishmongers, and ask him for information concerning the fishing from the shore, pier-head, quay, or off the coast, as the case may be. Such informants, being interested in attracting visitors, are sometimes apt to exaggerate a little, so that the information gained is not always so reliable as could be wished; but having made due allowance for this, sufficient knowledge of the place will usually be obtained to give a fair idea of the tackle required.

Generally speaking, a long, stout, cane rod, a large winch, 100 yards of plaited, tanned, hemp line, a hank of medium and one of very stout salmon gut, a few yards of fine Patent Gimp, eyed hooks of various sizes, leads of different weights, pierced swan-shot, two floats—light and heavy—artificial spinning baits, and spinning traces, form an outfit with which sea fish may be caught all round the shores of the United Kingdom. Now and again exceptional tackle is necessary; and where the necessity arises, the tackle to be used will be found described in other portions of this work. In this chapter I shall only deal with the tackle which is generally required. When, as occasionally happens, owing to the force and depth of the water, or to other reasons, there is no alternative but to fish after the manner of professional fishermen, which, as I have pointed out, partakes rather of the nature of business than of pleasure or sport, the necessary apparatus can nearly always be obtained from the local dealers. Even then some modification of their tackle in the direction of fineness near the hook is usually advisable. I have frequently heard fishermen urge amateurs to fish from the shore, piers, and in shallow water generally, with tackle that the professionals use in deep-sea fishing. They doubtless do this with the best intentions, but as they rarely or never fish from pier-heads and the like themselves, they are usually altogether ignorant of the best means of taking fish from such places. An angler fishing for whiting pout, we will say, from Brighton Pier, with a fine gut paternoster, will certainly catch five fish to every one caught on the ordinary sea fisherman's hand-lines.

Rods.—I will now describe two very useful rods, the first for general fishing, the second for fly fishing, but which, with a short top, may be used for any other purpose. If the angler is not likely to do any fly fishing, the second rod may be omitted; while if he wishes to fly-fish, and expense is a consideration, he can do without the first-named rod, and use his fly rod for all purposes. It may be advisable to say that anglers who have the necessary rods for fishing in fresh water, need buy little or nothing specially for use in the sea. The general rod should be in three joints. It is

best made of East Indian cane, with two tops of well-seasoned greenheart, and, when put up with the longest top, should measure at least 15ft. An extra butt, 4ft. long, bringing the rod to 19ft. in length, will be found occasionally very useful. The angler, of course, does not want to use a heavy, long rod, unless it is really necessary, but to be without one when it is wanted is a great nuisance. For boat work, a short rod is most handy; but from the shore a long rod is advisable. The second top should be only a foot in length, and made very strong. It is for use when



FIG. 1. SNAKE-SHAPED
ROD RING.

heavy leads are necessary, as in spinning, or whiffing for big fish, such as pollack and bass, and it reduces the rod to 11ft. in length.

There will, of course, be winch fittings on both butts. The best are those designed by Herr Weeger and bearing his name. They are strong, and take any sized winch. The very best rings for all kinds of rods are what are called snake-shaped rings. They are illustrated in Fig. 1. The line runs through them more easily than through any other pattern made, and never twists round them—a very important consideration. The ring I believe to be the best for the top of the rod is one I designed some years ago, and which is commonly known as the “Bickerdyke” rod top ring (Fig. 2). It works on pivots, and decreases friction by adapting itself to whatever angle the line makes with the rod. I have also found that with this ring the line rarely fouls the top of the rod, for, should it get round it, the ring at once goes flat with the rod, and the line slides off. At the most, a little jerk of the rod is all that is necessary to set it free. There is, sometimes, an interior ring (as shown in the illustration), which is capable of being shifted round when any part gets a little worn. This is



FIG. 2. “BICKERDYKE”
ROD TOP RING.

usually omitted in small rings. It is, as a rule, of steel, but should be of ivory for sea fishing. I may, perhaps, be prejudiced in favour of my own invention, but I should not venture to recommend it here had it not received the praises of a goodly number of accomplished anglers. Both the snake rings and the top ring should be of considerable size—much larger than those used on pike rods. The fly rod should be a salmon or grilse rod, about 16ft. long, made of greenheart or hickory—the former for preference. If the angler is very strong, and can wield a longer and heavier weapon, by all means let him obtain one, for he will be able to make a very long cast with it. On the other hand, if he feels a rod of 16ft. too much for his strength, he should be content with one of 14ft. The fly rod should have an extra top, only 6in. long, for use in general fishing. It is not a bad plan, when paternostering or float fishing, to have out a second and stronger line, with leger tackle, baited for big fish. The fly rod with the short top can be used for this line. The winch fittings and rings of the fly rod should be those already described. The joints of fly rods are sometimes spliced together, and sometimes fastened with ferrules. The latter method is the most convenient, but the spliced rods cast best, and I rather prefer them. The splicing, however, takes time, has to be carefully done, and is an undoubted bother. Against this, it may be said that ferrules get loose, and crack; and if a rod breaks, it is usually at the ferrule. If the fly rod alone is purchased, and it is used for general fishing, an extra butt may be added to increase the length of the rod when desirable. In this case, the lower end of the ordinary butt has to be fitted with a ferrule, as if it were a middle joint. Mr. Senior, the angling editor of the *Field*, has had a fly rod made with a telescope butt, which adds an extra 2ft. on to the rod when it is required. I have given this invention a trial, and should think that it would be very useful in lieu of the extra butt on the rod I have described. There are various methods of fastening the joints of ferruled rods together, but in the best rods now made no fastenings are necessary, the ferrules fitting one another so truly that

they never cast out. They are known as suction ferrules, and are, I believe, ground into one another, and fit as closely as the plugs in gas taps. It is well to vaseline or soap them before putting the rod together, or they may stick too fast. I have a fly rod made on this principle, by Messrs. Warner & Sons, of Redditch, which I put to the severe test of a month's fishing without once taking it to pieces. At the end of that time the joints were as tight as when first put together. I have, therefore, some reason to believe that, in a few years, the various contrivances for fastening together the joints of fly rods will fall into disuse. The same manufacturers are makers of the Hi Regan landing-net, and patent rod top ring, referred to on pages 6 and 11 respectively.

Lines.—Where expense is no object, a first-class eight-plait, pure silk line, carefully dressed with linseed oil (not boiled oil), is the very best line obtainable. For fly fishing it should be tapered, and of the substance used in salmon fishing. Probably the cheapest effective fly line made is the cable-laid cotton line (No. 2) of the Manchester Cotton Twine Spinning Company. The Company more than doubles the price of the line if dressed, so that a good many persons prefer to dress it themselves, at the cost of a few pence, with a mixture of coal tar and paraffin (in the proportion of three to one). These lines are not tapered. The Manchester Company make very superior cotton hand-lines. For general bottom fishing and spinning a medium jack line answers very well. Where expense is an object, I can recommend the tanned eight-plait hemp lines sold by nearly all tackle makers. I have had one of these lines for five years, and it still shows no signs of weakness; but I am very careful with my lines, drying them after use, and about once a week, when at the seaside, washing them in fresh water. There is not the slightest objection to the line for fly fishing being twisted; indeed, I have cast with mere twisted lines, which were admirable in every respect. It is surprising that they are not in general use, as they are considerably stronger than plaited lines. Anglers who can use Nottingham tackle will find a twisted pure silk line, such as is used on the Trent, very useful for

float fishing and paternostering, but very bad for spinning. If a fairly, fine twisted line is used, it should always be run directly on or off the reel, and never allowed to lie in coils on the ground, or it will tangle. Twisted lines, except those intended for Nottingham fishing, which cannot be too soft, are all the better for being dressed.

If hand-lines are required, they can be purchased at the seaside, from the dealers who supply the professional fishermen. The best are made of twisted horsehair, the elasticity of which is very valuable when large fish have to be played with the hand. Next to these are the ordinary hemp cords, tanned, or dressed with a mixture of coal tar and turpentine (for the latter I should substitute paraffin). Hand-lines commence at about the thickness of a penny penholder, or a little less. For drift-line fishing, light leads are strung on them, at distances of two fathoms. A hundred yards is not too great a length for any kind of line used in sea fishing.

The Reel, or Winch.—This must of a necessity be large, as it has to hold many yards of line. The simplest, strongest,

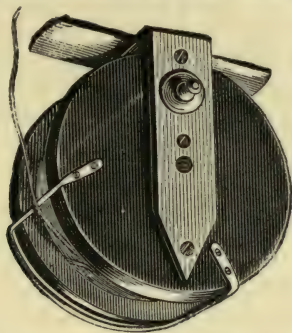


FIG. 3. NOTTINGHAM REEL WITH MOVABLE CHECK AND IMPROVED LINE GUARD.

and perhaps the best of all winches, is a plain—or with a slight check—brass one; but anglers who know how to use Nottingham reels will give them the preference. These latter are now made with a check, which can be put on or off—a very great convenience. The one fault with Nottingham reels is that the line,

particularly if a stiff-dressed one, sometimes uncoils itself and gets twisted round them. I have remedied this by fixing a brass wire on the circumference, in the manner shown in Fig. 3. If this fitting was more generally known, I believe no Nottingham winches would be made without it. The advantages of the Nottingham reels are the ease with which they run, which enables tackle of any kind to be cast out a long distance, the line running off the reel as the tackle passes through the air; the check of almost any degree of strength which can be put on them, by pressing the little finger of the right hand on the edge of the reel; and particularly the rapidity with which they take up the line, owing to the large diameter of the barrel on which the line is wound. One turn of a Nottingham reel about equals two of an ordinary winch, so that the advantage of a multiplier is gained without the intricate mechanism, which is so objectionable. The reel shown in Fig. 3 is a great favourite of mine, and I use it for most purposes. It has a check which can be taken on or off; the line cannot uncoil, by reason of the wire guard; and it is as good as a multiplier. There are reels made, a combination of the ordinary winch and the Nottingham reel. Some of them are so made that there is no rim on which the little finger can be placed as a check, but the "brake" reel and the Slater reel are excellent. If more line has been bought than will go easily on the reel, either cut some of it off, or buy a larger reel, which will take all the line and ten yards more if necessary.

Gaff-Hook and Landing Net.—Before coming to the lower—but not inferior—tackle, that round and about the bait, some reference should be made to gaff-hooks and landing-nets, which, with rods, reels, and lines, constitute what I may term the "standing rigging" of the angler. The gaff-hook should be a reliable instrument. The ordinary thing sold in tackle shops screws into a handle, and, this screw becoming loose as soon as the socket rusts a little, the arrangement is very unsatisfactory. Something better, and so simple that it may have been invented by the father of all fishermen, is a long, flat-shanked hook, with the end of shank brought to a fine point, and turned outwards as shown in

Fig. 4. The end of the shank is hammered into a good ash stick, and a lashing put round it (Fig. 5). It makes the most satisfactory gaff with which I am acquainted, and any one who can splice a rod can put this gaff on its handle in three or four minutes. When on fishing excursions I usually bind the hook to the stick, and keep it there. The binding—a piece of hemp, old fishing line, in fact anything that comes first which is strong and not too thick—should be waxed, and, if in-

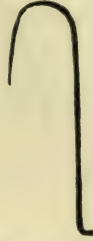


FIG. 4. GAFF-HOOK.



FIG. 5. GAFF-HOOK ON HANDLE.

tended for a permanency, is all the better for a coat of paint, or the tar and turpentine mixture used for dressing lines. The point of the gaff should be kept very sharp, by means of an occasional file, and it is as well to stick it in a wine-cork when not in use. The best gaffs are now made with bayonet-shaped points, invented by Dr. Brunton.

Some of the foregoing remarks apply to landing-nets; for the screw arrangement by which they are ordinarily fixed into their heads either rusts or wears loose, particularly under the influence of salt water, in an incredibly short space of time. A great improvement on the screw was a square head fixed into a square socket, and held in place by a spring-catch, introduced some years ago. It would be better suited for sea work with a brass or bronze spring. The Hi Regan* net has the best form of screw

* Captain Dunne ("Hi Regan") invented this screw, and I must take the credit—or discredit, as the case may be—of the fastening at the top of the bow. This net is illustrated in "Angling for Game Fish."—J. B.

I know. It is divided into two parts, which the natural spring in the bow of the net has a tendency to keep open, the result being that the screw fills out, and keeps tight, even in a well-worn socket. The Hi Regan net folds up for packing. As the sides are of highly tempered steel, some other metal would be desirable for sea work—phosphor-bronze, for instance. A capital net is made altogether of



FIG. 6. GALVANISED IRON
LANDING-NET RING.

wood, or wood and whalebone. It is light and very durable. The bow is formed of a strip of well-seasoned ash, steamed and bent into shape. This is bound on to a handle. A mere ring of galvanised iron (Fig. 6), with ends flattened and turned downwards, bound into a handle, answers every purpose. The net itself should be of large mesh, and either tanned or dressed. The object of the dressing is not so much to preserve the net as to render it stiff, so that hooks will not

entangle in it. With an ordinary soft, small-meshed net, a big fish, in his struggles for freedom, will sometimes mix up the hooks and net into a tangle, which causes valuable time to be lost. Fish often feed in an irregular kind of manner, taking any kind of bait ravenously for half-an-hour, and then disdaining the choicest morsels for the two hours following. It follows, therefore, that the angler who is not prepared to make the most of his opportunities—to make hay while the sun shines—to catch the fish while they are feeding—will never fill his creel.

Hooks.—Professional sea-fishermen generally tie a piece of hemp snooding round the shanks of their hooks, the tops of which are flattened to prevent the knot slipping off. This is about as primitive and awkward a method as could well be imagined.

In the deep-sea cod fisheries, hooks are sometimes used which are more sensibly shaped. The end of the shank is turned round to form an eye, and into this eye the snooding

is fastened. Of late years, eyed hooks, as they are called, have come greatly into use in fresh water, and they, undoubtedly, have many advantages. The arguments *pro* and *con* have been discussed at so much length in the angling press, that I need not enter into them here; but I will unhesitatingly say that for the angler in salt water they are the most useful kind of hooks which can be obtained.

In bass and pollack fishing, it is of the first importance to have good hooks, and it is the worst possible economy to buy cheap ones, which are certain to be badly tempered. A hook should be neither over-tempered or brittle, causing it to snap when subjected to a heavy strain, nor under-tempered or soft, opening when the point is pulled against the mouth of a fish. With so many different pattern hooks to select from, it is a little difficult to say which is the best.

Sea fish take the bait eagerly as a rule, and the exact shape of the bend is not of very great importance, provided the hook is not radically bad. For fly fishing in salt water, I think the Sproat hook as good a one as can be made: it may not hook so well as some other bends, which is not of the same importance with bass as with trout, but it holds well—a very important point in bass fishing. For the smaller fish, a Round or Kendal Bend hook answers admirably. Hooks are made with the points slightly twisted to one side. They do very well for fly fishing or whiffing, but I do not like them for ground fishing. Rather a longer shank can be used in the sea than in fresh water, which is a decided advantage, as the longer the shank the greater is the penetrating power possessed by the hooks. Hooks to be avoided are those with points bending outwards away from the shank; these scratch more fish than they hook. A large barb is not necessary. A sharp point is very essential; this depends in the first instance on the hookmaker, afterwards on the angler, who should sharpen up the point occasionally with a needle or watchmaker's file. In sea fishing it is very desirable to have hooks made of rather stouter wire than

is usual in fresh-water angling. Some of the bends of hooks are illustrated in Fig. 7. According to the drawing, the Limerick hook has the point turned out in the

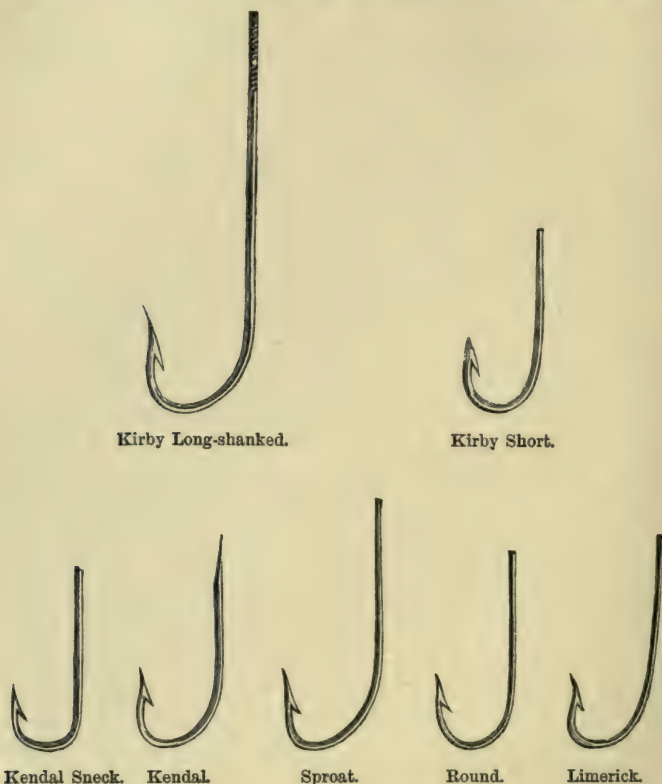


FIG. 7. VARIOUS BENDS OF HOOKS.

objectionable manner I have commented upon. If this point were turned inwards a little, so as to be parallel with the shank, the hook at once becomes a very good one. The

best method I know of fastening gut to eyed hooks, is that shown in Fig. 8, invented by Major Turle. The end of the gut, after being well moistened, is first put through the eye

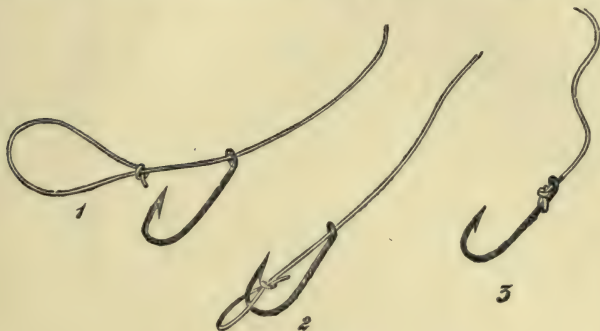


FIG. 8. THE TURLE KNOT.

on the side remote from the point, a slip-knot or noose is then made (1), the hook passed through it (2), and the gut pulled tight (3). In Fig. 9 is shown a simple knot which has



FIG. 9. A NEW KNOT.

been well spoken of. My experience tells me that it is not altogether safe, unless the eye of the hook fits the gut closely. Gut is fastened to hooks without eyes by means of waxed silk or thread lashed round the end of gut and the shank. The method of fastening off the silk is shown in Fig. 10. Having bound on the silk as far as the end of the gut, the end of the silk is laid along the shank, and two more turns of the binding taken with the loop of silk. At each turn the hook

passes through the loop. Each turn of the silk also passes over the end of the silk laid along the shank, which should now be pulled tight. This is most difficult to describe on paper, but will, I hope, be understood by the engraving (Fig. 10). It is the usual method of fastening off bindings on hooks, or near the ends of rods, &c. Where a piece of binding has to be done in the middle of a rod, the same fastening is made in a different manner (*see* Fig. 11). A round piece of wood, such as a penholder (the finger will do), is laid along the thing bound, and three turns taken with the silk



FIG. 10.
FINISH OFF OF WHIPPING.

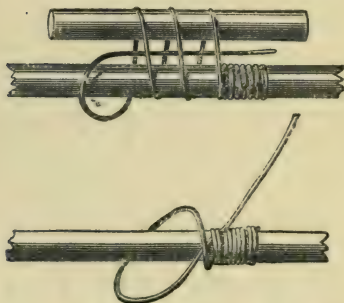


FIG. 11. FINISH OFF OF WHIPPING IN MIDDLE OF ROD.

know it. The best way of fastening gimp to a conger or hake hook, is to pass the end through the eye of the hook, and bind it on with strong, waxed thread, or soft copper wire.

A useful invention in connection with Fig. 12. SLICED HOOK.



over penholder and all. The end of the silk is passed under the three turns of silk, the penholder is then withdrawn, and the silk tightened. The process is extremely simple, and every angler should

books has been patented by Mr. Marston, the editor of the

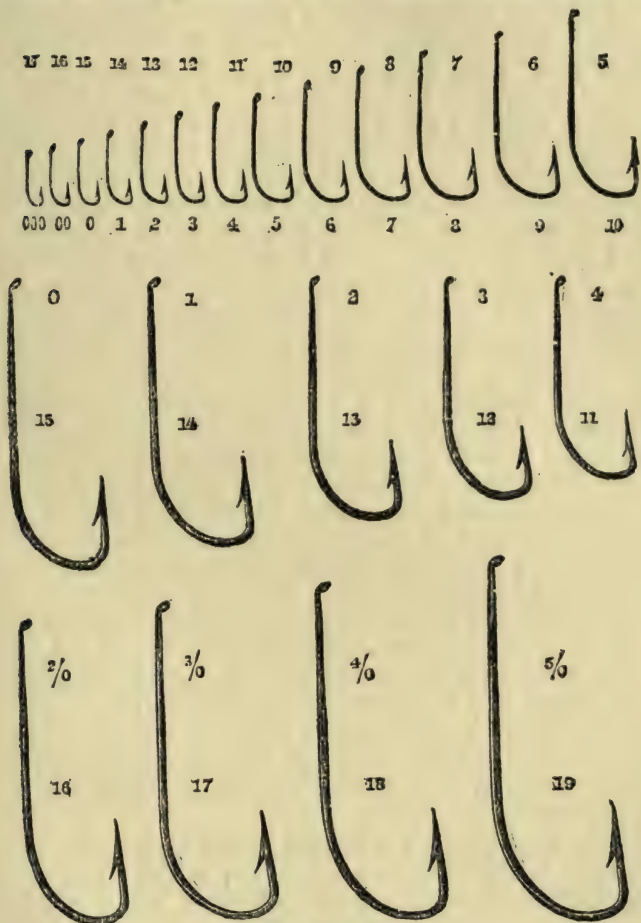


FIG. 13. HOOK SCALE.

(The top figures are the Redditch scale. The lower figures are the modern scale referred to throughout this book.)

Fishing Gazette. It is called the "sliced hook" (Fig. 12), and is intended to prevent the bait from slipping down the

shank. It answers its purpose well, and is, of course, only used for those methods of fishing in which a portion of the bait is pushed up the shank of the hook, and is intended to remain there.

The variation in hook scales is the *bête noir* of writers on angling. Different towns have different scales, and different makers in those towns number their hooks in different ways, and sometimes vary their own nominal sizes. The only thing I can do is to place before my readers a hook scale (Fig. 13), and let it be an understood thing that when I refer to certain sizes of hooks by a number, I refer to the lower numbers. The bend of hook shown is a very good one. It is known as the Pennell-Limerick, and is made by Messrs. Bartleet and Sons, of Redditch. Hooks of that kind are numbered according to the scale given. I forbear to enter into the turn-up or turn-down eye discussion, as I am perfectly convinced that for angling in salt water it matters little or nothing which are used. My preference is for those turned down.

On the subject of eyes there is, however, a good deal to be said—and sung too, might be remarked, only I refer solely to the eyes of hooks. The large majority of eyes are unnecessarily large and clumsy, and I must say that the only really satisfactory eyes I have seen are those on the Pennell-Limerick hooks made by Messrs. Bartleet and Sons, and on some hooks patented by Messrs. Warner and Sons. In the former, the wire is filed down at the end of the shank, and turned into a very small, neat eye. In the latter, the eye is made of a separate piece of fine wire carefully brazed on. These hooks are somewhat expensive, but the double grilse hooks, with the brazed eye, are first-rate for large bass flies.

The Paternoster : Gut, Gimp, and Knots.—The paternoster is by far the most valuable piece of tackle used by the angler in salt water. It consists of a length of gut, on the end of which is a leaden weight, and from which project three or more pieces of gut bearing the hooks. The weight of lead, thickness of gut, or gimp—for that also is used—position and size of the hooks, all vary according to circumstances, such as

size of fish, depth of water, and nature of bottom. To make the typical paternoster (Fig. 14), take a three-yard length of fairly stout gut, and, after well soaking it, make a one-and-a-half-inch loop at one end, and a smaller one at the other. On to the large loop fasten the lead after the method illustrated; then make a small loop in the gut five inches above the lead, fourteen inches higher a second loop, and fourteen inches higher still a third. The hooks—No. 9 and No. 10 are good general sizes—should be tied or bound on to pieces of gut about 6in. or 7in. long. The hooks are then fastened to the paternoster in the following simple manner: The loop on the paternoster is put through the loop of the gut on the hook; the hook is then put through the loop on the paternoster, and the thing is done. Fig. 15 shows the best method of joining lengths of gut together. Without the silk binding (an idea of Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell) it is the old fisherman's knot, which is very commonly used. In my experience it is unsafe, and has caused me to lose many fish. With the white silk binding the knot is absolutely safe, and also neat. Fig. 16 illustrates another very good gut knot, which never comes undone, but is not quite so neat as the one shown in Fig. 15. Its great

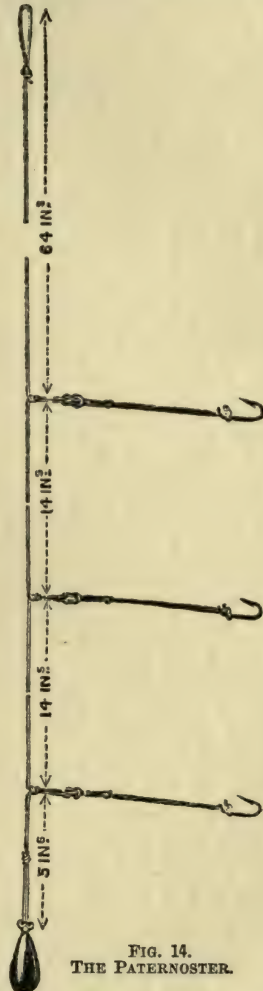


FIG. 14.
THE PATERNOSTER.

advantage is that it can be tied at any time. The illustration hardly requires explaining; but it may be useful to say that the first process in tying the knot is to lay the ends of the gut over each other for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in., tie them in a simple knot, and put the ends through a second time before pulling tight. In Ireland the common reef-knot is a good deal used for tying lengths of gut together, but I am absolutely certain that it is not to be relied on. The two knots illustrated are

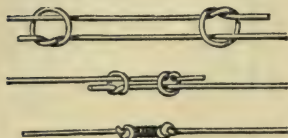


FIG. 15. THE STRONGEST KNOT FOR TYING LENGTHS OF GUT TOGETHER.

safer and better than any that have yet been invented. Fig. 17 illustrates the simple method of tying a loop at the end of a gut cast or collar.

The fisherman's knot can be used for this purpose, but it makes, when finished, almost the same knot as the one shown, and takes rather more time to tie.

There are several methods of attaching the running line to the gut or gimp tackle, but the knot shown in Fig. 18 is about the best. It is known to sailors as the common bend, and is a very useful knot for many purposes connected with matters outside fishing tackle.

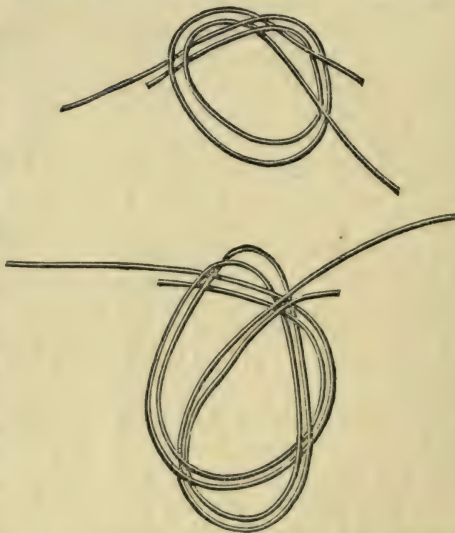


FIG. 16. ANOTHER METHOD OF JOINING LENGTHS OF GUT.

Gut must always be either well soaked in cold water, or

moistened in the mouth until it is soft and can be tied without cracking. Never put it in hot water, and avoid even luke-warm water for the purpose, unless you are greatly pressed for time. Hot water is ruinous to gut. It is always more satisfactory to buy the gut in hanks and tie it, than to purchase the usual three-yard casts sold by tackle-makers, as the knots in these

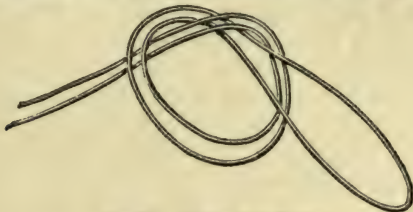


FIG. 17. KNOT FOR LOOPS.

are not always reliable. Except in the manner already described, anything in the nature of a silk binding over the knots is quite unnecessary. I have so far only described the typical paternoster. Where large fish are expected, it may be made of the stoutest salmon gut, or gut less stout used double. I do not advocate twisted gut for sea fishing, as strands of it are apt to break without being noticed by the angler, who, believing in the strength of his tackle, bears heavily on a big fish, and loses it. In fresh water twisted gut is often used with advantage; but in salt water gut quickly becomes brittle, and when one strand of a piece of twisted gut breaks, the remaining strands, which have also grown brittle, are, of course, not strong enough to hold a big fish. If double gut



FIG. 18. ATTACHMENT OF LINES TO COLLARS.

is used, the strands are best laid side by side, not twisted. Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell has suggested laying two gut casts side by side, and twisting them. The idea seems a good one. The casts should, of course, be so arranged that they do not come opposite to one another. As fine as salmon-gut, and as strong, is a new Patent Gimp which has been introduced

by Messrs. Warner and Sons, of Redditch. Inside the gimp, surrounded by silk, are one or more strands of fine wire, made of a patent composition which does not corrode, and possesses great tensile strength. I have tested some of this gimp, and find it bears a strain nearly double that borne by the best ordinary gimp of the same gauge. It probably has a great future before it for sea-fishing purposes, for the ordinary gimp is most unreliable stuff, and even when made with pure silk, which is not often, can never be depended upon after a few weeks' use. The Patent Gimp is first-rate for conger and hake

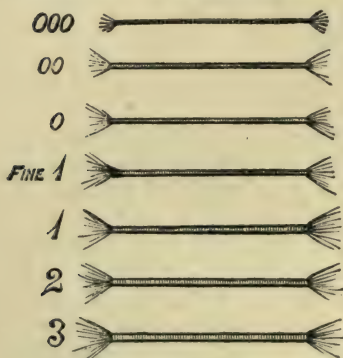


FIG. 19. GAUGES OF GIMP.

hooks. The gauges of gimp are shown in Fig. 19. No. 00 in the Patent Gimp will be found strong enough for fish up to 20lb.; for conger, No. 1 or No. 2 should be used. Gimp cannot be tied; the loops have to be made by turning the end round, and binding with silk or thread. As I have already said, the paternoster tackle admits of much modification. If the water is very deep, the lowest hook may be 18in. from the lead, and the other hooks

2ft. or more apart; if the bottom is very rocky and foul, the lowest hook must be put at such a height from the lead that it does not catch on the bottom; and, on the other hand, if the bottom is of sand or mud, and flat fish are expected, the lowest hook should be on 10in. or 12in. of gut, and be looped on close to the lead, so that the bait on that hook lies on the bottom. There is one disadvantage in making loops on the vertical gut portion of the paternoster; it, to a certain extent, fixes the places where the hooks are to be. A plan I often adopt myself, especially when the main portion of the paternoster is of salmon gut, is to make no loops, but to fasten on the hooks just above a knot, in the manner shown in Fig. 20. The hooks may then be put

at any height, according to circumstances. If the main gut line is served round with a little fine silk for a quarter of an inch or less, to prevent friction with the hook link, so much the better. When fishing for conger, it is advisable to run brass swivels down the line, and fasten the hook links to them (Fig. 21). They prevent much entanglement.

The hooks on a paternoster need not, of course, be all of the same size. For instance, a large one, mounted on gimp, may be put on the bottom loop, and be baited with half a pilchard for a conger. It is very convenient, when fishing strange water, concerning which no information is

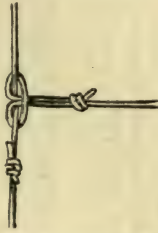


FIG. 20. METHOD OF FASTENING HOOK LINKS ON TO PATERNOSTER.

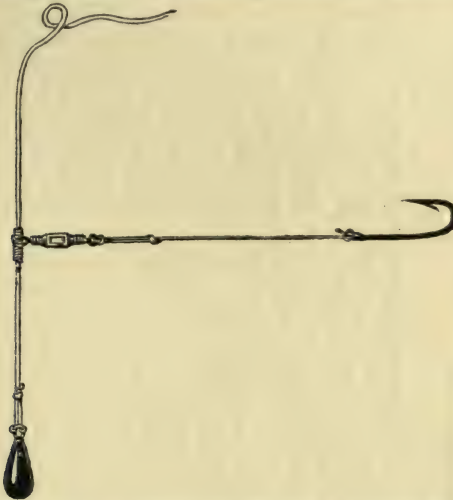


FIG. 21. HOOK MOUNTED WITH SWIVEL ON PATERNOSTER.

obtainable, to use four or five hooks and a variety of baits, which, in all probability, will soon enable the angler to see what fish are to be caught.

The Sea Leger.—This is a very useful piece of tackle for catching flat fish, and for casting out at the mouths of rivers for



bass. A lead shaped as shown in Fig. 22 is strung on a foot of Patent Gimp. At each end of the gimp are loops, and on the binding of each loop a split swan-shot is fastened on, to keep the lead from slipping off. Small glass beads, put on the gimp before the loops are made, will answer the same purpose. They must fit the gimp tightly. Below the lead is 4ft. of gut—strong, medium, or fine, according to the fish expected—terminated by the hook. On to the other end of the gimp is looped a piece of salmon-gut, about 2ft. or 3ft. in length, and on this it is a good plan to have a second hook, which, unless the tackle is cast some considerable distance by the angler, will be a few inches from the bottom. It may be looped on to the line in the manner shown on page 23. The advantage of the lead sliding on a foot of gimp is that, immediately the bait is taken, the angler feels the pull of the fish, the line being drawn through the hole in the lead. When the lead is fixed the fish has, of course, to move it before the angler can perceive a bite. If the Patent Gimp cannot be obtained, copper or brass wire should be used, as ordinary gimp is most unreliable. As a rule, the leger is cast out and allowed to remain on the bottom; but from a boat or pier it may be used in a different manner, the lead being kept suspended at such a height that the bait is a few inches off the bottom. Fished in this manner, it will occasionally take fish when the paternoster fails; but the paternoster is the most generally useful tackle for the purpose.

FIG. 22. THE SEA
LEGER.

Float Tackle.—This I may divide into two kinds—heavy and light; the former for use

in the sea, the latter for harbour fishing. For fishing in the open sea, from piers, &c., the best form of float is one similar to those used by jack fishers—pear-shaped, with a hole drilled down the centre, through which the line passes. The float is kept in its place by a long, hard-wood plug, which fits the hole. Beneath the float there is 5ft. or 6ft. of stout gut, terminated by a hook. Sinkers of some kind are necessary to keep the float erect; and as the exact weight varies, depending on the strength of the tide, I have devised a little arrangement, illustrated in Fig. 23, by which the weight of the sinker can be increased or decreased with great facility. I take a piece of stout gut, 8in. in length, knot the two ends together, and put a few turns of waxed thread round it, as shown at B. I then thread pierced pistol bullets on to the loop A, the first of which stops at the binding, B. I can obviously put as many or as few bullets on as may be necessary. Loop A is then fastened to the loop E on the gut, and the 2ft. of gut (F) bearing the hook looped on to the small loop, D. The arrangement is very simple. To add or to take away any of the bullets, the loops A and E have to be undone, which is a matter of no difficulty. The whole thing can be accomplished in a couple of minutes. The top of the float should be



FIG. 23. HEAVY FLOAT TACKLE, WITH IMPROVED ARRANGEMENT OF LEADS.

painted a bright red, so as to be visible among the waves; for the lower portion, any subdued tint will do. If the sea is quite calm, a smaller float may be used—for instance, the favourite one of Nottingham anglers, a large quill. If a fine Nottingham silk line is used with this float tackle, something much akin to the professional's drift-line fishing can be managed where the water is not more than ten fathoms deep. The boat is anchored in the tideway, as heavy leads as the float will bear are put on the line, the float is shifted as far from the lead as the water is deep—further if the tide is very strong—and an extra 2ft. of gut is added below the lead. The float is then let out for 20yds. or 30yds. or so, and checked. The depth has to be found by plumbing. The line must be fine, or it offers too great a surface to the water, and causes the bait to be lifted too far from the bottom.

Light float tackle should be very similar to that used for roach; any small float will do, those long and tapered being best. The gut line should be fine, and the sinkers may be either split shot, bitten or pinched on to the line a foot from the hook, or lead wire twisted round a needle laid along the gut, the needle being afterwards withdrawn, and the coil twisted tighter. Float tackle for smelts should be of the finest gut, and so weighted that only a small fraction of the float is visible above the water; the slightest bite can then be perceived. Small floats are usually attached to lines by the wire ring fixed on one end of the float, and a movable quill cap slid on the other. These quill caps are apt to cut the line, and split. The best caps are made of a sort of oilcloth material.

SPINNING, TRAILING, WHIPPING, AND RAILING TACKLE—ARTIFICIAL BAITS.

Professional sea fishermen rarely use spinning baits; a portion of, or a whole fish, dragged through the water, answering their purpose. Their method answers admirably for mackerel; but for bass and pollack a spinning bait has special attractions.

Spinning tackle consists of two parts: the flight—a length of gut or gimp bearing the hook or hooks; the trace—a length of gut or gimp bearing the sinker, and swivels to keep the line from twisting.

Spinning Flights.—Any small fish will do for spinning, and the best tackle for the purpose (there are many good ones) is, I think, that known as the Chapman spinner. The hooks shown in Fig. 24 are not a good shape; the triangles advocated by Mr. Pennell, in which the point is straight, and does not turn out, are far better. The gimp on which the hooks are mounted should be white or silver, so as to make the bait more attractive; that above the bait, brass. Brass gimp is generally stained by fresh-water anglers, to take off some of the brightness, which scares jack; but in the sea the brightness goes off so quickly that the staining is not necessary. Some of the processes—for there are several—are apt to weaken ordinary gimp.* The number of triangles shown are, except for a very large bait, too many. I never use more than two on one side and one on the other. To bait, insert the leaded spike in the mouth of the bait, right up to the fans; one hook of each of the triangles is then fastened into its side, and the affair is ready. If the lead is too thick, it can be easily pared down with a penknife. There should be a foot of fine Patent Gimp, terminated with a loop, above the brass swivel. The Chapman spinner is so excellent a piece of spinning tackle that I need only mention one other. It consists simply of one or two triangles, attached to the end of a foot of gimp, the other end being



FIG. 24. THE CHAPMAN SPINNER.

* A new gimp stain is given in "Angling for Pike."

looped. By means of a baiting-needle the loop of gimp is inserted at the vent of the bait, and drawn out at its mouth, and the triangle pulled up close to the belly. Sand-eels and small eels are usually trailed after the boat on two hooks, mounted one above the other (Fig. 25). They are, however, more deadly when spinning. A Chapman spinner without lead, with small fans, and only two triangles, should be used as a flight for the purpose (Figs. 26 and 27).* A lobworm is sometimes used as a spinning bait on the double hook tackle (Fig. 28).



FIG. 25. SAND-EEL ON ORDINARY TRAILING TACKLE.



FIG. 26. CHAPMAN SPINNER FOR SAND-EELS.



FIG. 27. SAND-EEL ON CHAPMAN SPINNER.

The worm is threaded up the big hook until its head comes up to the small hook, which, if eyed, is easily fastened, by a knot, in its place on the gut. The small hook is caught in the head of the worm, which then spins very well. Exactly similar tackle is used for trailing a small conger or fresh-water eel. Half an eel, on a Chapman spinner, is a very

* The Archer spinner, a new form of Chapman, illustrated in "Angling for Pike," is also very good.



FIG. 28. LOBWORM ON SPINNING OR TRAILING TACKLE.

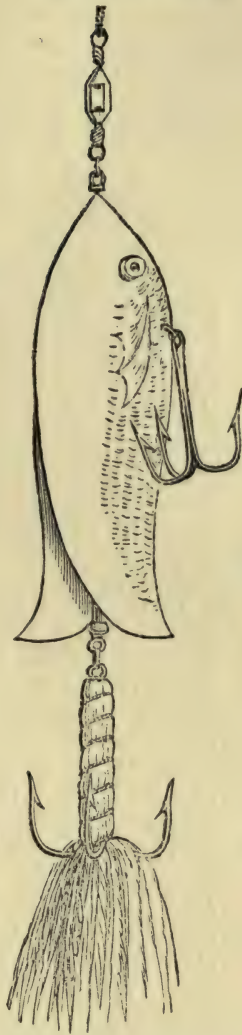


FIG. 29. GREGORY'S CLIPPER BAIT.



FIG. 30. INDIARUBBER BAND BAIT.

good arrangement, but the cut end, which comes next the fans, must be tied up tightly with twine. One bit of eel will sometimes last out a day's fishing.

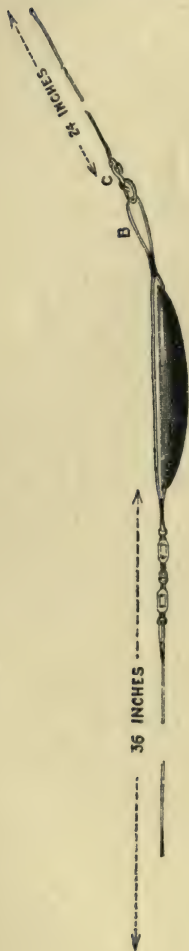


FIG. 31. TRACE WITH DOUBLE SWIVELS AND LEAD TO PREVENT KINKING.

Artificial Spinning Baits.—The best are: A spoon-bait each side of which is half gold and half silver; a red phantom minnow; Gregory's Clipper bait (Fig. 29); the red, artificial, indiarubber sand-eel, with or without Hearder's Baby spinner at the head; the Devon minnow; and last, but far from least, two red indiarubber bands (Fig. 30), cut, and caught by the ends on two hooks placed a few inches apart. These, when drawn through the water, present a most lifelike appearance. The tackle for them is made in a couple of minutes with two eyed hooks and a length of gut.

Traces.—The trace is a very important portion of the spinning tackle, for on it depends whether or not the line is twisted up and kinked, and the angler's life made a burden. The best manner of making a trace is illustrated in Fig. 31. At the lower end is a swivel of peculiar construction, to which the loop on the flight can be easily attached; then follows 3ft. 6in. of Patent Gimp or double salmon gut; then a pair of good-sized brass swivels; a boat-shaped lead, strung below the level of the line, the gimp through it being continued to form a loop 4in. long; and lastly, 2ft. more gimp or double salmon gut. The long loop above the lead is a little idea

of my own to enable additional leads to be looped on (*see* Figs. 32, 33). Any number of these can be added. In pollack fishing especially, it is very necessary to be able to add to or lessen the amount of weight on the line, as, during the daytime, it is, as a rule, necessary to fish close to the bottom, and as the depth varies, so must, to a certain extent, the leads; but a great deal can be done by merely letting out or shortening line, operations which have the effect of sinking or raising the bait respectively. The angler should never purchase a trace in which the lead is not below the level of the line, and two swivels placed somewhere below the lead. This system of weighting a trace has been used by sea fishermen for many years, but the idea was elaborated by the late Francis Francis, and more recently by Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell, for angling in fresh water. Mr. Wood's saddle lead, described in "Angling for Pike," is also very good. This trace is intended for casting out a spinning bait. When the bait is merely dragged behind the boat, it is as well to make the length of gimp below the lead 4ft., 5ft., or longer.

In whiffing or railing for mackerel a single hook is used, to which is caught, by one end, a strip of mackerel skin. Two hooks and two strips of skin,



FIG. 32. EXTRA LEAD FOR SPINNING TRACE.



FIG. 33. SPINNING TRACE WITH EXTRA LEAD.

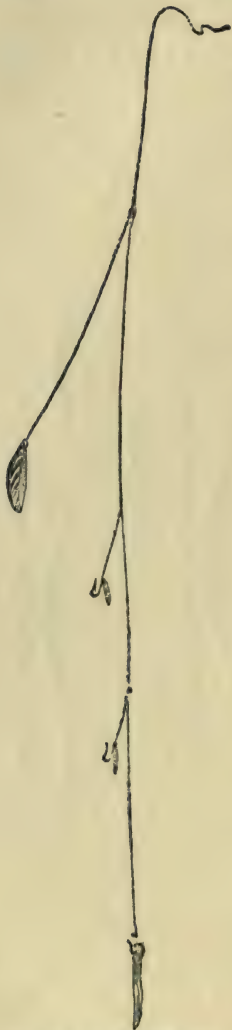


FIG. 34. HAND-LINE FOR
MACKEREL RALING.

similar to the band bait (*see* page 29), can sometimes be used with advantage. The trace shown in Fig. 31 answers as well for mackerel as for other fish; but as some of my readers may wish to fish for mackerel from a yacht, whose fast sailing would render angling impossible, I give an illustration (Fig. 34) of one of the tackles used for the purpose on the South coast. The whole thing, except the lead, is made of hemp snooding, which, with the line, has to be strong enough to tow a 3lb. mackerel after a sailing vessel. One or more flies are sometimes added to the snooding. The leads vary in weight from $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. to 5lb. The distance from the junction with the line bearing the lead to the end hook should be from 2yds. to 5yds., according to the weight of the lead. The line bearing the lead should be 2ft. or 3ft. long.

Sundry Tackle, &c.—Among the sundries, the “courage” (Fig. 35), a basket



FIG. 35. COURAGE.

for holding live sand-eels, stands first. It has long been used in the Channel Islands, and was introduced to our fishermen by Mr. Wilcocks. I believe they are to be obtained at Plymouth.

Failing these, a finely-woven basket may be tried; but the course is specially shaped for towing after the boat.

Charts showing the depths of the sea, position of rocks, set of tides, &c., are very useful additions to the sea angler's outfit.

A reel of silk, a reel of thread, and a piece of cobblers' wax in a square patch of leather, should be owned by everyone calling himself an angler. The varnish for bindings is composed of six parts shellac, eight parts spirits of wine, and two parts gum Benjamin.

The disgorging, for getting hooks out of fish, is very useful. I once had one made with a corkscrew-handle (Fig. 36), which was very effective with big fish. The handle was leaded, and served to knock them on the head. The little things sold in the shops only answer for small fry. A needle or watch maker's file is useful to sharpen up hooks and the gaff.

The bait-box for rag and other worms may be simply a large gentle-box; but for boat work, where something larger can be carried, it should be of wood, half covered, so that the worms have a dark corner to lie in. It should be made watertight by means of pitch, and be kept very clean. A piece of board about 2ft. by 1ft. is handy to cut fish-baits on.

The plummet illustrated in section in Fig. 37 is used for taking the depth and one other purpose. On its lower surface a hole (B) is scooped, in which tallow may be placed. The nature of the bottom is then easily discovered. The hook is put through the ring, and into a piece of cork (A) let into the lead. Such a plummet should weigh about half a pound. For use with light float tackle, smaller plummets are necessary. They are sold in all the tackle shops of the shape shown in

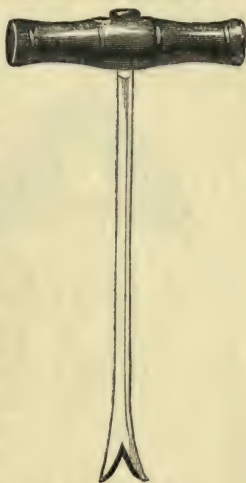


FIG. 36. DISGORGER.

Fig. 38. The larger plummet can be kept permanently attached to a light cord, on which the fathoms are marked off. In that case the cork is not required.

I have given some account of hand-lines at the end of Chapter IV., so that any description here is unnecessary, more especially as hand-line fishing takes me rather outside my subject.

Anglers who have the time should make up their own tackle. Obtain the best hooks, gut, swivels, &c., money can purchase, and from them make up the necessary forms of paternosters,

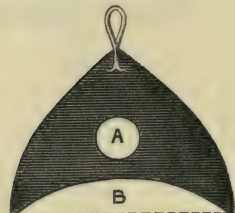


FIG. 37. SECTION OF PLUMMET
WITH CAVITY FOR TALLOW.



FIG. 38. ORDINARY LEAD
PLUMMET.

legers, traces, &c. There is always a chance of a big fish when angling in salt water, and it is necessary to have very sound tackle. That purchased, except from a few of the first houses, is thoroughly unreliable, and even the made-up tackle of the best houses comes to pieces after a very little use. As long as so many of the girls who do the binding and tying are paid by piece-work this will probably be the case.

A few special pieces of tackle will be found detailed in their appropriate places.



CHAPTER III.

BAITS.

Bacon Skin — Cockles — Crabs — Cuttle — Earthworms — Eels — Garfish — Gentles — Herrings — Horse-Mackerel — Lamperns — Limpets — Lugworms — Mackerel — Mudworms — Mussels — Oysters — Pilchards — Prawns — Ragworms — Rock Ling — Sand-eels — Shrimps — Smelts — Snails — Sprats — Squid — Whelks — White Sandworms — Ground Baits.



THE difficulty of obtaining baits is very often the sea-angler's greatest stumbling-block for though sea-fish feed on a great variety of food, it is sometimes next to impossible to obtain anything suitable. In the writer's youthful days, he made his *début* as a sea-fisherman on Brighton Pier. His ideas on the subject of angling were rather general than particular, and knowing that most sea-fish devour their own species, he thought that any piece of fish would do for bait. The result was a failure. Next day, having noted that certain brother anglers placed mussels on their hooks, he imitated them, and soon hauled over the side of the pier three whiting-pout, in the capture of which he experienced the pure, unalloyed delight common to youngsters on taking fish for the first time. If he had then been able to study the following list of baits, he would probably have added to his basket.

I have endeavoured to make this chapter as comprehensive as possible, so that, however badly off the angler may think himself for bait, by looking through the long list given he may chance upon something procurable. The names are arranged in alphabetical order, for convenience of reference.

Bait-boxes, and the cutting-board, the use of which is always advisable when fishing from a boat, have already been described on page 33.



FIG. 39.
BACON
SKIN
BAIT.

Bacon Skin.—Out of bacon skin a very fair imitation sand-eel can be made (Fig. 39). The skin should be soaked, scraped, and cut into long, thin strips, about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide and 3 in. or 4 in. long. The point of the hook is then put through the end of a strip, and the hook carried right through to the top of the shank, where a couple of turns of twist are necessary to keep the skin in position. Bass and pollack often take this bait freely.

Cockles.—These little shell-fish have not much repute as a bait, except for whiting pout, but may be tried when nothing better can be obtained. They may be found, in some localities, along the seashore when the tide is very low; they lie a little below the surface, and a small hoe, or rake, is often used to dig them up.

Crabs.—The common green crab is so well known as hardly to need a description. It abounds among rocks, in harbours, and may even be found among the stones of a pebbly beach. In its ordinary condition it is not much used as a bait, except for lobster pots, and, pounded up, as ground-bait. A quantity may easily be obtained by sinking a piece of netting stretched on to a hoop, in the centre of which is a piece of meat. On lifting up the net, some crabs will usually be found feeding on the meat. Crabs are a great nuisance to the ground or bottom-fisher in harbours, taking bait after bait off the hook. When about to cast its shell—a process in which some are engaged at most periods of the year—the green crab becomes very valuable as bait, and is then known as

Soft Crab. In this condition it is found hiding under stones and among nooks and crannies in harbours, which afford the necessary concealment from its enemies. Mr. Wilcocks recommends residents near harbours having muddy shores to contrive a number of artificial shelters, by means of old,

earthenware pots, old saucepans, &c., to the number of 200 or 300, placing them on the shore between half tide and low water mark, so arranged that a small hole is left for the crab to enter. By this means, baits are always available to the angler—or someone else. Soft crabs are the best known baits for flounders, and in brackish water fresh-water eels and bass take them greedily. They are rather tough, and not easily taken off the hook by fully-fledged individuals of their own species.

The Hermit, or Soldier Crab, passes a hermit-like existence in shells belonging to departed whelks. The soft, tail portion, is a good bait, used whole, for pout and haddock. Occasionally, cod will take it. These crabs may be obtained from trawlers and the owners of lobster-pots, and a few are generally to be found among the rocks near low water mark.

Cuttle Fish.—This is the most ugly bait the angler in salt water is likely to be concerned with. The body consists of a sort of pouch, from which spread out a number of long arms, furnished with suckers arranged in rows. They frequently take the bait intended for other fish, and on being brought to the surface should be promptly gaffed, and then pressed under water again until they have expended the means of defence which Nature has given them—a bag of ink-like fluid, which clouds the water around them. A useful gaff for hooking up this fish is made by lashing a large fish hook, or triangle of hooks, with the barbs filed off, on to a stick. As a bait the cuttle is very valuable, being not only liked by many fish, but possessing such a degree of toughness that it is not easily washed or bitten off the hook; for fishing in a strong current it is very suitable. Bass, cod, and conger most favour this bait; but it is taken by many other fish. In fishing for haddock, it is an excellent plan to place a piece of cuttle on the hook, tipping the point with a mussel.

Earthworms.—Large lobworms are used for trailing for pollack when nothing better can be obtained (*see* page 29), and for ground fishing in *brackish* water. They should be tried when ragworms cannot be obtained. They can be picked up in great

quantities off closely-mown lawns, and by the sides of garden paths, at any time during the night, unless the wind blows roughly; on windy nights they should be searched for in sheltered spots. They can, of course, only be seen by the light of a lantern, and are more abundant after a showery day than during a spell of dry weather. Redworms and brandlings, which are found in old dungheaps, are also occasionally used in harbour fishing with success. Earthworms can be kept for a considerable time in damp moss, which should be changed occasionally and the dead worms picked out. The longer the worms are in the moss, the better they are for bait.

Eels.—Small fresh-water eels, or elvers as they are called, make excellent whiffing baits for bass and pollack. They are not easily obtained, and should be sought for under stones in brooks, an iron table-fork being held in readiness to impale them immediately they are discovered. Young conger eels make equally good baits for the same purpose; they are to be found in little pools, and under rocks left bare by the receding tide. In a bay where a stream trickles down a valley, over the beach, and among the rocks, into the sea, they lie under those rocks below high water mark by which the fresh water passes. When the eels are too large for use—over 6in. or 7in. in length—a portion of them can be used. To bait with eels, *see* page 28.

The Garfish, Longnose, Snipe-Eel, or Sea-Needle.—Small pieces of this fish, which is more fully described in Chapter IX., are sometimes used as baits for conger, whiting, and skate; and a strip cut from its side is occasionally trailed for pollack, mackerel, and bass.

Gentles.—These are the maggots found in fly-blown meat, and are a very useful bait for bottom-fishing in fresh water. Grey mullet will sometimes take them in harbours. They can generally be obtained, during the summer months, at any butcher's. They should be kept in bran or damp sand, in a cellar or some other cool, dark place.

The Herring.—This valuable food fish is very useful as a

bait for pout, cod, haddock, turbot, and conger; in fact, most kinds of sea fish will take it. It is generally to be obtained from the fishermen, or at the fishmongers'. In some of the Scotch lochs it sometimes takes the fly. As it is an oily fish, it forms a good addition to the ground-bait net, and for this purpose is largely used in America.

Horse Mackerel.—This fish is described in Chapter IX. It is not much used as a bait, except in prawn nets and lobster-pots.

Lamperns and Lampreys.—These fish, of which there are several varieties, have the appearance of eels, but in the place of a mouth have a sucking apparatus. They are chiefly valuable as a bait for turbot, but the angler in salt water will find them useful as a whiffing bait for pollack, mackerel, and bass. In the spring, the lesser lamprey, a little creature only about 6in. long, is to be found in the shallows of many streams, probably scouring after spawning. For whiffing or trailing, they are used in the same manner as small eels.

The Limpet.—This little fish inhabits a small, conical shell, and is to be found closely adhering to rocks. Limpets are not good baits, but whiting pout and sea bream will often take them. The soft part, with a very small portion of the hard part, should be placed on the hook, the point of which should go through the hard portion. It is by no means a lasting bait, unless dried for half an hour in the sun, when it toughens. It is very little use to endeavour to pull limpets from rocks, for the moment they are touched they put out all their stick-fast powers to the utmost. A sudden tap with a hammer easily knocks them from their hold.

Lugworms are excellent baits for most ground-feeding fish, but are unpleasant to fish with, having a fluid interior, which runs out at the slightest provocation, on which account they should be used whole. They are from 4in. to 6in. in length, and may be easily found by digging with a garden fork in the sand where worm casts are noticed. Whiting and whiting pout take these worms greedily, and, as a matter of fact, they are good baits for most sea fish. To keep lugworms, place them in

a heap of wet sand and seaweed, in a cellar or other cool place.

The Mackerel.—This fish is honoured with a chapter to itself; it is, therefore, sufficient to say that a strip of its skin, cut so as to be half blue and half silver, about 3in. long and $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide,* is the best known bait for mackerel. The strip of skin dangles at full length from a hook, and, when drawn through the water, gives a striking imitation of a young fish twisting and twirling about (see Fig. 40). Congers have a *penchant* for a bit of mackerel, which should be tried when they are biting shyly, taking other and softer baits off the hook. Cod, whiting, turbot, skate, and many other sea fish, will also take it. The strip of skin used in mackerel fishing is sometimes called a “last.”



FIG. 40. THE MACKEREL
BAIT, OR “LAST.”

The Mudworm.—See RAGWORM.

The Mussel.—An invaluable and much used bait. Not the least of its virtues is the length of time it will keep alive, when placed in a basket or hamper cast into any quiet nook below high water mark. Mussels are found on rocks, under seaweed, attached to the piles of piers, on a gravel bottom—in fact, they are ubiquitous. Almost all sea-fish may be caught with their assistance. If the fish are large-mouthed, such as whiting, large mussels should be used; while for pouts small ones should be picked out. Some anglers bake them in their shells for a few minutes before using for bait, but I cannot recommend this plan. It certainly makes the mussel pleasanter to use, but far less attractive to the fish. To open mussels requires a little practice. The point of the knife should be inserted between the shells at the broadest part, and given a twist, which levers the shell open. The fish has somewhat the appearance of an oyster turned yellow; a small yellow heart, or

* Mr. Wilcocks says the “last” should be triangular in shape, the apex or top being caught on the hook.

tongue, will be noticed. Into this the point of the hook should be stuck, taken right through, round the mussel, and in again through the gristly part by which the shell was fastened to the rocks. When fish are repeatedly robbing the hooks baited with mussels, it is an excellent plan to tie a piece of cotton or thread round the bait. Mussels, or portions of them, are the common bait for dabs. When fishing at anchor for mackerel they are sometimes used; they are good baits for haddock, and, as I have said, are taken well by most sea fish.

Oysters, as fish baits, I have no personal experience of, but their beards are used with great success, for bass and other fish, by Mr. T. R. Sachs, an accomplished salt-water angler. Any fishmonger's assistant would, no doubt, be able to supply the beards by the hundred for a small consideration. I see no reason why the other portion of the oyster should not be equally killing, and imagine it would prove to be better than mussels.

Pilchards, or Cornish sardines, as they are sometimes called, are not often to be obtained far from Cornwall and Devon. The flesh of this fish is an excellent bait for whiting, cod, conger, haddock, and skate. The entrails, however, are better, and will take almost any fish that swims in the sea. When fishing for mackerel at anchor they should always be used, if available. As they give off a large quantity of oil, they form a valuable addition to any ground-bait mixture. In cutting up a pilchard for bait, it is usual to scale it, cut off the head and tail, split it up the back into two pieces, remove the backbone, and then cut each side into as many strips, a little under lin. wide, as it will make. When using half a pilchard for conger or other large fish, the bait should not be cut in half until the moment it is required, as the oil which comes away from it when fresh cut, seems to attract the fish. Pilchards are only taken in nets by professional fishermen, from whom they are to be obtained.

Prawns are well known to every visitor to the seaside. They may usually be obtained from the fishmonger, or by searching with a hand-net in the pools, among the rocks, at low tide.

Pollack will take them alive, and they are a good bait for mullet, flounders, dabs, eels, and smelts, if peeled. This operation is a little difficult unless the prawns are boiled, but they are far more killing raw.

Ragworm, Mudworm, or Pollack Worm.—This is a long, flat worm, about the size of a brandling, with a fringe of legs on each side. It is found in mudbanks below and about high water mark, and is easily obtained by digging. The unsavoury black mud of harbours contains thousands of these worms, and any fisherman's son will obtain a can full for a few pence. The largest ragworms are found under large stones, and in nooks and crannies between rocks; but they are not so plentiful as the smaller kind in the mud. At places like Brighton, Hastings, and Eastbourne, where there are neither harbours nor creeks, they are not found. Ragworms rank high among baits. Two or three of them, hooked through the head, are a good whiffing bait much liked by pollack. There is nothing better for the bottom hook of a paternoster when harbour fishing, the ragworm being much affected by flounders, dabs, and fresh-water eels. For sand-smelt fishing they are the best bait known. Ragworms should be kept in a little seaweed and sea water, and looked over at least once a day, when the water should be changed. A shallow, wooden box, about 1ft. square, with a cover, is the best thing to keep them in. All dead or wounded worms should be removed. Some people keep these worms for a night in powdered saltpetre or salt. This kills and toughens them; but I doubt if they are so attractive to the fish after this pickling process.

The Rock Ling, or Sea Loach.—This is a useful little fish for pollack whiffing, but is not so good as a sand-eel, or small conger or fresh-water eel, which latter it somewhat resembles in shape. In colour, it is a light brown, with dark spots down the sides of the back. They should be searched for under stones, among rocks, and are sometimes taken with fine float tackle—the hook baited with a shrimp, or soft part of the limpet—in pools among rocks. Where fresh water runs

to the sea through seaweed-covered rocks they frequently abound. They spin well on a Chapman spinner, or may be arranged on the small, eel-trailing tackle shown on page 28, Fig. 25.

The Sand-eel, Launce, Lant, or Horn-Eel is eagerly devoured by all kinds of large fish, and is the most valuable of baits. There are three varieties: The grey or brown back, the green back, and the plum-coloured or purple back. The two latter are launce, the first-named being the sand-eel. In shape they are not unlike an eel, but are silvery. They are found buried at the edge of the sand, when the water is at its lowest, and are commonly obtained by digging and raking, the best times for finding them being moonlight nights during spring tides. Immediately one is seen, it should be seized, for they bury themselves in the sand with great rapidity. A better method of taking them is with a seine net, worked either from boats or the shore. A seine net, and the method of working it, will be found described in great detail in Mr. Wilcocks' "Sea Fisherman." As so very few amateurs are likely to require these nets, the description here seems unnecessary. In the Channel Islands, the sand-eel is used alive; and this system has been introduced by Mr. Wilcocks to this country. To keep sand-eels alive, they should be placed in a pear-shaped basket, called a *courge* (*see* page 32), made of fine osier twigs, with an opening, closed by a flat piece of cork, and towed after the boat, or moored in a suitable spot. Dead sand-eels are also excellent baits. They can be either trailed, or worked on spinning tackle (*see* page 28), for bass, pollack, and mackerel, or used on ground-lines for whiting, mackerel, and, in fact, any kind of sea-fish. To bait with these little fish, put the point of the hook in at the mouth and out at the gills, catching up a small piece of skin below the gills. If the tide is slack, the hook can be put through the back, near the head. When half sand-eels are used, they should not be cut until they are required for the hook. Sand-eels are excellent eating. For spinning purposes, they may be preserved for years in spirits of wine, or King's preservative, sold at 157, Commercial Road, London.

Shrimps.—These well-known little creatures are very useful baits. When alive, pollock will take them, and in their raw state, if peeled, they are also a first-rate bait for mullet, smelts, and small flat fish. For harbour fishing they are, however, usually boiled; but to do so is a mistake. To keep shrimps alive, it is necessary to place them in a box, pierced with holes (a finely woven basket will do), moored in salt water.

Smelts and Atherine, or Sand-smelts.—These little fish abound in harbours and sandy bays. They are easily captured on a fine paternoster (see pages 54, 55), and large hauls are sometimes made by means of fine-meshed seine nets. They are a good bait, and can be used alive, trailed or mounted on spinning tackle, when sand-eels are not to be obtained. They are often used by professional fishermen for baiting long lines, conger and turbot being very fond of them. Their great fault is that they are soft, and easily spoiled; thus, for spinning, a good supply should be taken. The sand-smelt may be distinguished from the smelt proper by having rays in the second dorsal fin, which in the true smelt is adipose or fatty, somewhat like that of the *Salmonidæ*.

Snails.—Garden snails may be used for whiting pout when nothing better is obtainable.

Sprats.—As these valuable little food-fishes are only caught during the autumn and winter months, they are not much used by the angler in salt water; but they are a good bait, and are taken by the fish which are caught on the pilchard bait.

Squid.—The squid is very similar to the cuttle fish, but is, if anything, rather a better bait. There are several varieties. All that has been said concerning the cuttle as a bait equally applies to this fish.

Whelks.—I am not aware that whelks are used as a bait, except for cod, and occasionally for pout. They are taken by dredging, in lobster-pots, and on long lines, to which are fastened small crabs strung on twine.

White Sandworms are found in sand and sandy mud. A good many fish will take them, particularly sand-smelts.

Ground-baits.—References to ground-baiting will be found scattered through this book, and I need only here mention a few recipes for some of these invaluable mixtures. One of the best for use in slack water is that known in the Channel Islands as *chervin*. It simply consists of very young shrimps, which are caught in a fine-meshed net and salted down. A few spoonfuls, mixed with a little water, are thrown in when it is desired to attract grey mullet. Another mixture, which answers as ground-bait for many sea fish, consists of green crabs pounded up, and limpets, their shells broken, and themselves chopped up small. Green crabs may also be pounded up with chalk or oyster shells. Pilchard guts, or pieces of the fish cut up, are extremely useful for attracting fish, owing to the amount of oil given off. Fish meeting with globules of this oil very likely follow up the scent until they come to the ground-bait, by which is the angler's tackle. In France, America, and Australia, ground-baiting is not uncommon; but it is little practised in England. In America, herrings are pounded up in a mill to make ground-bait for mackerel. At San Sebastian, balls of clay, heads of sardines, and potatoes, are thrown in to attract grey mullet; crumbs of bread are sometimes thrown on the surface of the sea for the same purpose.

I have spoken of ground-bait as attracting the fish. The vulgar idea is that it possesses that property alone. It has, however, two other virtues, which are, if anything, more valuable than the first-named. It causes fish to feed; and secondly, it lulls their suspicions. These remarks apply with equal, if not greater, force to angling in fresh water.

The angler cannot be too particular about his baits. He should have a goodly supply; they should be the best obtainable, and always be tended with care if kept for more than the day.

CHAPTER IV.

ROD-FISHING AND HAND-LINING.

*Angling from Pier-heads—Ground-baiting—Paternostering—
Fishing with Float Tackle—Drift-line Fishing—Fly-fish-
ing—Angling in Harbours—Smelt and Sand-smelt Fishing
—Angling from the Open Shore—Hand-lining—Taking
Marks.*



PIER-HEAD, harbour, and shore fishing are all peculiarly adapted to those persons who, when in boats on the restless ocean, are wont to render a votive, albeit unwilling offering to the sea god. It must be acknowledged that, as a general rule, the quantity of fish taken from these places is not great; but, more often than not, this is owing rather to lack of knowledge and skill on the part of the angler than to any scarcity of fish. I say this advisedly, for there are a few salt-water anglers who rarely fish from piers without being successful. At the same time, there are certain places—carefully avoided, no doubt, by the said skilful anglers—where, from causes not easily determined, the fish are few and small. It should be remembered that fish which frequent harbours and haunt the piles of piers are fished for a great deal, and get shy, like, but not to the same extent as, their harassed fresh-water brethren. Fine tackle, therefore, is very advisable, and the importance of ground-baiting can hardly be overrated.

When about to fish from a pier-head, or, indeed, anywhere

else, the first thing to do is to make some inquiries of local anglers, the piermaster, old salts, or the fishmonger, and obtain some idea of the fish which are likely to be caught. Knowing this, consult the chapter on Baits, and see what are at your disposal. Do not be misled by being told in winter of the fish which are caught during the summer, and *vice versâ*. For instance, it is little or no use fishing for bass in December. If no reliable information can be obtained, the best thing to do is to use your own judgment, trying all kinds of baits and various methods of using them. Some of the following fish may nearly always be expected: Bass, between April and the end of August, or later; rock-fish, pout, whiting, mackerel, coal-fish, pollack, horse-mackerel, grey mullet, red mullet (rarely), codlings, smelts, congers, flounders, plaice, dabs, chad (small sea bream), and cod occasionally. There are also two prickly little fish, whose spines inflict nasty wounds—the long-spined bullhead and the dragonet. They are not unlike miller's thumbs. They may easily be known by their ugliness and ferocious appearance. I cannot call to mind any one place where all these fish are to be caught, but the list is fairly representative of what may be expected. Some of these fish, such as flounders and dabs, are not found on a rocky bottom; and others, *e.g.*, wrasse and pout, are rarely taken except on or near rocks. If the angler can discover the nature of the bottom where he is fishing, he can in general form a good idea of the fish he may expect and the best baits to use. A very simple arrangement, used by sailors, and shown in section on page 34, can be used where the water is so deep that the bottom is not visible at dead low water. It is simply a cone-shaped lead plummet, varying in size according to the depth of water to be sounded, in the bottom of which is a hollow space containing tallow; the cord passes through the ring on the top. This weight is let down to the bottom, and, on being hauled up again, whatever is sticking to the tallow—sand, mud, fragments of seaweed, shells, &c.—tells the angler of what the bottom is composed. A little judicious plumbing will sometimes determine the exact position of a cluster of rocks, near which

it is very desirable to angle for certain fish, especially pollack, coalfish, pout, and conger. As a sounding lead is often required to take the depth when drift-line fishing, it is a good plan to have the lead made according to the shape shown in Fig. 37, when it will both take the depth and determine the nature of the bottom. The cord to which it is attached should be marked off in fathoms by pieces of twine put twice or thrice round it, and then between the strands. In heaving the lead, it is then only necessary to count the number of knots which pass through the hand to know the depth in fathoms.

A perusal of Chapter III. will give all the information required concerning baits. It will be sufficient to say here, that among the best are sand-eels, ragworms, mussels, beards of oysters, pilchards (entrails or body), strips of mackerel skin, and shrimps, alive for pollack and the lesser flat fish, peeled but not boiled for most other fish. Ground-baiting, as I said at the commencement of this chapter, is all-important for success; several mixtures of the kind will be found on page 45. In grey-mullet fishing, some of these are merely thrown on the surface; but more commonly the mixture is placed in a weighted net (*see* Frontispiece), and sunk within a foot of the bottom, as close as possible to the spot where the baits are dangling ready for the fish to seize them. A judicious shake now and again, given to the cord to which the net is attached, sets loose some of the bait, which the fish seize. In placing the ground-bait net, the angler should note carefully the set of the tide, and place his tackle so that whatever is washed out of the net is carried past his hooks. The ground-bait not only attracts fish, but it induces them to take the bait on the hook, under the belief that it is one of those harmless fragments which have come out of the net.

The paternoster, rod and line, described in the second chapter form the most generally useful tackle for fishing from pier-heads. The hooks baited, the tackle should be let down into the sea, and when the lead touches the bottom the line should be kept tight. When a fish bites, the top of the rod will be jerked slightly; or if it is a big fish, there may be one dead,

heavy pull. I usually hold the rod in my right hand, and bring the line over my first finger, then under the second, third, and fourth. I thus detect very light bites by the pull of the line, which is instantly felt on the back of the first finger—bites which sometimes do not perceptibly move the top of the rod. On feeling a bite, strike sharply, and if the fish is hooked, play him carefully, keeping a tight line. With regard to the strength of the tackle, that should vary according to the sorts and sizes of fish which are caught off the pier. If conger abound, the bottom hook should be mounted on fine gimp (*see* page 23); and single salmon gut is certainly not strong enough for large pollack, for these fish cannot be “played,” but *must* be held, otherwise they go down to the bottom, and get “hung up” among seaweed and rocks. Again, if the angler is obliged to fish from the top of a lofty pier, where he can bring neither gaff nor landing-net to bear on his fish, he must use rather a large hook, and tackle strong enough to lift the largest fish he is likely to catch on to the top of the pier. At the same time, if too coarse tackle is used, the sport will be bad; and it is often worth while to use very fine tackle, risking the chance of losing a big pollack or conger, and make a good basket, rather than use coarse, strong tackle, fit to hold a halibut, and catch next to nothing. The size of the lead at the end of the paternoster has to vary according to the force of the tide, the depth of water, and thickness of the main line, for the water exerts more pressure on a thick line than on a fine one, and therefore renders necessary a heavier weight to keep it down. In rough weather, very heavy leads are necessary. The paternoster can be fished, when advisable, twenty or thirty yards from the pier. To cast it out, a quantity of line must be uncoiled, the lead drawn up within about 10ft. of the top of the rod, and swung out after the method described in spinning for bass in Chapter V. Immediately the tackle touches the water, let out more line, so that it be not dragged back, and the advantage of distance lost.

Float tackle (*see* page 25) is sometimes used off piers in ground

fishing, but it is only useful where the water is not deeper than the rod is long. At greater depths, sliding floats may be used (these slide down the line as the fish is pulled up, and allow the line to be reeled in); but they do not always answer, and the



FIG. 41.
SLIDING FLOAT.

paternoster is preferable. One is shown in Fig. 41. A piece of hog's bristle, which is so long that it will pass through the rings of the rod, but not through the rings on the float, is tied on to the line. When fishing with the live sand-eel for bass and pollack, a float is a decided advantage; and if a fine silk line is used, the bait can be let out with the tide for a long distance. This is similar to the Nottingham method of fishing, described in the chapter on bass. When fishing on the bottom, with float tackle, it is necessary to find the depth, and fix the float so that the bait hangs a few inches above the bottom. For this purpose, the small plummet shown on page 34 should be fastened to the hook, and let down to the bottom, and the float moved until the top of it is a little below the surface. If the tide is rising, it will be necessary to put the float higher every half-hour; if it is falling, to put it lower. Drift-line fishing, without a float, and with or without sinkers, may also be practised from pier-heads when the tide is sufficiently strong to take out the bait—sand-eels, ragworms, or live shrimps. The angler should always keep his eyes open for bass, mackerel, and grey mullet, all of which, at times, feed on the surface, and if he sees them, angle for them after the methods described in this book. Both flies and spinning-baits can

be cast from piers which are not too high, and even from lofty piers fish may be taken by this means, if they are swimming close to the piles.

Night fishing is often very successful, particularly for cod and

conger, which latter fish are in the habit of coming into the shallows at night in search of food. Sea bream also feed well at night; and, as a general rule, early dawn and sunset are far better times to fish than during the day; and the best sport is nearly always obtained during the two hours previous to high water.

When angling from pier-heads, it is always a good plan to throw out a gimp leger, made according to the directions on page 24, and baited with squid, herring, pilchard, mackerel, or some other large bait, on good-sized hooks. This need not necessarily be attached to a rod; but where the angler has a stiff fly rod with the stout top, as described on page 7, he can use it for this purpose. This line will take conger, bass, big pollack, and (but rarely) red mullet or a wandering cod.

In harbour fishing, the methods employed are similar to those described for pier-head fishing; but finer tackle may generally be used, for, as a rule, the fish do not run to any great size. Here, again, it is important to know what is to be caught, and to obtain all the information possible. The most common harbour fish are dabs, flounders, and small pollack. If a river runs into the harbour, fresh-water eels may also be expected, and bass in the early autumn. Sea trout are also taken occasionally. As a rule, the best baits to use are ragworms, soft crab, or peeled, unboiled shrimps, on either paternoster, leger, or float tackle. I imagine the beard of an oyster would also be a good bait. If the leger is used, and bass are known to be in the harbour, the bottom hook may be rather large, and baited with a piece of squid (sand-eels, alive or dead, are better, if they can be obtained); and, on a smaller hook, above the lead, either ragworms, soft crab, or unboiled, peeled shrimp. When it is desirable to fish some distance out, this is the best tackle to use, for it can easily be thrown out thirty or forty yards. The weight of the lead must depend on the force of the current—an ounce being often quite enough, three ounces not always sufficient. Bass are mostly caught after August, and during spring tides. If the angler is fishing just under the point of the rod, and the water is deep and the current strong, the paternoster should be used; but float tackle is preferable for water 18ft. or

less deep. Gut of medium size is, as a rule, sufficiently strong. Directions for using the paternoster have already been given. The hooks for flounders and dabs need not be large—about No. 7 or No. 8—and I have noticed that I have caught most of these fish when my tackle has been fine.

In some harbours the tide runs with great force, and the best places to fish for bass are just by the edge of the current, where very heavy leads are necessary to keep the baits on the bottom. This fishing is usually done from a boat anchored in the tideway. Professional fisherman use for this purpose a boat-shaped lead, with a long, hemp snooding. A better tackle is the sea leger, already described on page 24. The leads for this will have to be specially cast, as they are not commonly sold of the necessary weight. What weight is necessary depends so much on circumstances—the strength of the current, the depth of the water, and the thickness of the line—that it is impossible to lay down any definite rules on the subject. The lead should work on the stoutest gimp, and be kept in its place by two small, split bullets, or glass beads, fitting the gimp tightly. The hooks have to be large, and on strong gimp or very strong salmon gut (not always to be obtained), as fish play very heavily in the strong current. Where the lead is so heavy that a rod cannot be used, I as often as not adopt the tackle of the professional fisherman, merely rendering it somewhat finer towards the hook end by means of gut or fine gimp.

Smelt and sand-smelt fishing is a thing of itself. These delicate little fish swim in shoals a little below the surface, and should be fished for with roach hooks, on the finest of tackle. It is most difficult to detect their bites; but skilled London roach fishermen, among whom are some of the most skilful anglers in the world, can catch them on light float tackle, for they can detect very slight movements in the float—invisible to ordinary eyes—which indicate the bites. Less skilful anglers use a paternoster with three, four, or even more roach hooks (No. 0 or No. 1). The gut links to the hooks should not be more than 5in. or 6in. in length, and put so far apart that they do not entangle. The main line need not be thicker

than two thicknesses of ordinary sewing thread; and if this fine line is used, a small pistol bullet is a sufficient weight. If a coarser line is used, a lead weighing a half-ounce or an ounce will be necessary, or the line will not run through the rings of the rod. The best baits for sand-smelts are either small pieces of ragworm or unboiled shrimp, and the hook should just be tipped with the bait. As many of the bites cannot be felt on the paternoster, and as the fish, when plentiful, and in the humour, bite very freely, it is a good plan to strike every few seconds, when fish will often be found hooked. This is usually done; but I am inclined to think that, with an exceedingly fine, undressed silk main line, such as Nottingham anglers use for chub fishing, and a light cane rod, most of the bites can be felt. I fish that way myself; but whichever method is followed, the result will be very much the same. Ground-bait is sometimes used for smelt fishing; but as a rule it is not necessary. If there is no current, a little can be thrown in occasionally, and allowed to sink; but if the stream is strong, it should be put in a net, and sunk a few feet below the surface, near the hooks. The spots in harbours where smelts are mostly found are near the outfalls of drains, ditches, and streams of fresh water. The true smelt is not often found on the South Coast, but the atherine, or sand-smelt, abounds. On the East and West Coasts the atherine is wanting, and the smelt plentiful. These fish are more often angled for in harbours than elsewhere; but they are also taken in bays and up creeks.

So far I have only dealt with fishing in harbours and from pier-heads. In some places, angling may be carried on successfully from the open shore. Fly fishing from rocky points for bass and pollack will be found described in Chapters V. and VI. A paternoster can be used where it can be got out into deep water. Those narrow inlets of the sea, such as one meets with in Scotland, where they are called sea lochs, often afford very fair rod fishing from the shore, as the water runs deep in many places close to the edge. Whatever baits can be obtained may be tried, especially the mussel; and the fish taken will vary according to the locality. In some places

whiting pout will abound, in others wrasse, and in others, again, youthful coalfish, known in Scotland as cuddies—which little fish, by the way, take a fly very well. In the south of England, bass will often be taken; and there is always the chance of a large pollack off any rock round which the tide sets strongly, for pollack delight in a good flow of water.

Fish may sometimes be caught from the beach by throwing out a line a considerable distance. An ingenious plan is adopted by fishermen at Deal, and other places on the East coast, by which many fish are taken; it may hardly be termed angling, but merits a description. The tackle (*see Fig. 42*)—to

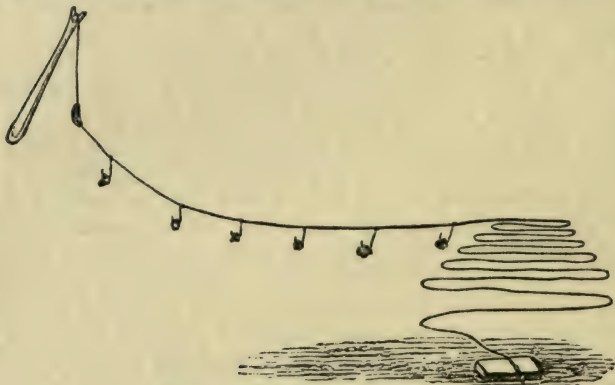


FIG. 42. THE DEAL SHORE TACKLE.

begin at the far end of the line—starts with a button; then comes a short piece termed the sling line, then a lead, and, following that, the main line—with a few hooks, either on short snoodings or on the wire chopsticks described on page 57. An essential part of the apparatus is a springy, ash stick, about 3ft. long, tapered, and with a two-pronged fork at the end. The hooks being baited with squid, mackerel, or any bait sufficiently tough, the fisherman coils his line carefully on the shore, except the portion with the hooks, lead, and sling line; these he lays out in a line along the beach. He next places the button, which is at the extreme end of the line, in the fork

at the end of the stick, swings the lead once or twice, and then casts it out as far as he can. The lead used weighs about $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. The angler, with light tackle and dressed line, can throw out his sea leger or paternoster just as far as the Deal fishermen can their heavy leads. Many Thames fishermen, indeed, can cast much farther. There is occasionally one objection to the light leger lead when used from the shore: the wash of the waves brings it in shore; or, if the lead is not moved, the line beyond the lead is washed back, and entangles with the line above the lead. When this is the case, the paternoster should be used, but the ordinary pear-shaped lead should be exchanged for a flat one. If two holes are drilled in this flat lead, and stout pieces of wire fixed in them, so that the ends project $\frac{1}{2}$ in., a very light lead will hold the bottom (Fig. 43). I need hardly say that no leaded tackle (unless used with a float) should be thrown out over a rocky bottom, for hooks, lead, and line, are all sure to catch, and loss of tackle is a certainty. The angler must be some distance above rocks to be able to fish them, except, as I have said, with float tackle. As a rule, flat fish alone will be taken on a line thrown off a sandy shore; but if the place fished is at the mouth of a river, bass (*see* Chapter V.) will often be caught on the paternoster or leger.

Float tackle is sometimes used from rocks with great success, the fish taken being principally pollack and bass. The subject is treated fully later on. The angler who is used to live-bait fishing for jack will have no difficulty in casting his float tackle, if not too light, 40yds. out to sea, or more. Easy casting depends on three things: heavy tackle, a light line, and a rod fitted with proper rings (*see* page 6). Light tackle cannot be thrown with a heavy line. The best plan is to



FIG. 43.
IMPROVED PATERNOSTER LEAD
FOR THROWING OUT ON
SANDY BOTTOMS.

use what is termed Nottingham tackle, and to cast from the reel. I have gone into the matter in detail in the chapter on bass fishing.

A few lines on hand-line fishing at anchor must bring this chapter to a close. Hand-lining can hardly be termed angling, but it is generally practised, and, as it must be resorted to on a few occasions, when very heavy leads and coarse lines are necessary, on account of the force and depth of the water, this book would be incomplete without some description of the method. A hand-line is simply a light, hemp cord, tanned or dressed with a mixture of turpentine (or paraffin) and tar, with a weight at the end, and two or more hooks, kept apart by spreaders or chopsticks. Of this tackle there are several varieties, but I need only mention two. The first is known as

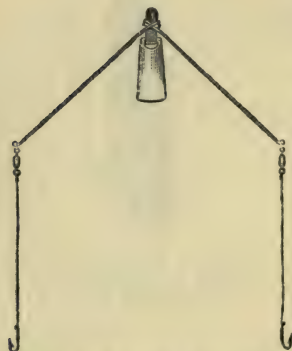


FIG. 44. TACKLE FOR HAND-LINING
(KENTISH RIG).

the Kentish Rig, the illustration of which (Fig. 44) renders any lengthy verbal description unnecessary. The hooks should, as a rule, be on gimp or gut, stout or fine according to the fish sought after. The swivels and spreader should be of brass. The spreader is wound twice round a piece of leather, which passes through the lead. The line is fastened by going through a slit in, and then round, the leather. Each arm of the spreader should be 9in. long, and the gut attachment of the hooks about 2ft.

The weight of lead may be anything from 2lb. to 5lb., according to circumstances. In using this tackle, it is thrown overboard, and the line allowed to run out until the lead touches the ground. It is then hauled up 2½ft., when the hooks will be just off the bottom. When fishing for flat fish, the lead may be a little lower. Another kind of hand-line is made without the cross spreader, but with what are termed chopsticks of wire, placed on the line above the

lead; in fact, a paternoster, in which the hooks are kept away from the main line by pieces of wire. Mr. Wilcocks' method—the best with which I am acquainted—of making this tackle is to take four turns at one end of each of the brass-wire chopsticks, and so make a spiral coil, through which the main line can be passed. A knot has to be placed above and below each chopstick, and the portion of the line where they work has to be served with waxed thread, to keep them from wearing the line. To the end of the wires are attached the gut lengths and hooks. The chopsticks should be 2ft. apart, and the gut or snooding to the hooks as long as may be without fouling. The advantage of this tackle is three different depths being fished at one time.



FIG. 45. HOW TO TAKE MARKS.

In using hand-lines, they should always be held in the hand, and not tied to the boat seat and allowed to fish themselves. Immediately a bite is felt a jerk should be given, and the tackle hauled up, hand over hand, as quickly as possible, for fish which are not played on a rod often get off the hook. The fisherman who can haul the fastest takes the most fish. Success depends most of all on the boat being at the right spot, and for this the boatman is, of course, responsible. He finds his position by marks on the coast; and people who

do much sea fishing should make a point of learning the marks of the different places where fish abound, and how to take them. Taking marks is a simple matter (*see* Fig. 45). Supposing that the spot is a mile out at sea, look half a mile down the coast to the left, and get an object near the shore—a lighthouse—in a line with an object in the distance—a tree; then look half a mile to the right, and get two more objects in a line—say, a cottage and a church. These four objects constitute the necessary marks for the spot in question, and four objects are absolutely necessary. If a diagram is made, it will be seen that lines drawn across the objects out to sea meet at a certain point, which is the spot desired to be marked. To find the spot again, it is necessary to first get, say, the lighthouse and the tree and the boat in a line, and then row along that line until the cottage covers the church.

Be advised to wear warm clothing when sea-fishing in an open boat, and be provided with a good oilskin coat and “sou’-wester.” For winter work, fishermen’s stockings (which go over the trousers), of undressed wool, and long boots, are capital things to wear.

Hand-line fishing is wet work, but in warm weather, when the fish are plentiful and large, it affords good fun. The sport, however, is usually very small compared with that afforded by angling in salt water.

CHAPTER V.

THE BASS.

(BASSE, SALMON-BASS, WHITE SALMON, or SEA-DACE).

Appearance—Habits—Food—Methods of Angling for—Fly-fishing—Spinning—Drift-lining—Nottingham Tackle—Ground-fishing.



THE bass decidedly holds the highest place among those sea-fishes which afford sport to the angler. It belongs to the perch family; but when the prickly dorsal fin peculiar to perch is not erect, it may be, and, indeed, sometimes is, mistaken for salmon, and sold under that name, by cunning fish-hawkers, to unsuspecting visitors to the seaside. The

back of the fish is a dark blue, the sides and belly silvery. The mouth is leathery, and hooks stuck in it rarely come away; but on the tongue and along the jaws are sharp-pointed teeth, which frequently fray or cut the stoutest salmon-gut, as many a bass-fisher knows to his sorrow. Bass vary from a few ounces to 15lb., or more, in weight, and there are tales told of much larger fish even than that; but 10lb. or 12lb. fish are not common, the average size being somewhere between 2lb. and 4lb.

Bass are not commonly found in the more Northern portions of Great Britain, but abound on the South and South-West coasts. They have been noticed in Berwick Bay and the Firth of Forth, but are not common there. They are taken on the East coast of Ireland, between Waterford and Belfast Bay.

In angling for these fish it is very essential to have some knowledge of their habits. As a general rule, bass do not approach the shore much before June, and the large fish leave about October. On the Devon coast they have been taken as early as February, but are never seen there in numbers until March. They seem easily affected by the temperature of the water, and in warm, early seasons, may be expected in shore sooner than when the spring is cold and late. Until August they are found principally shoaling off headlands and along the coast, but in that month they commence to work into estuaries, where they deposit their spawn. They show a decided preference for those rivers which have sandy or gravelly bars at their mouths. Round pier-heads and about large harbours they are to be found during the summer, and a favourite haunt is by wreckage, or any old hulk which has been moored for years in one spot. In the estuaries, they work up and down with the tide, and a point of beach stretching out at the mouth of a river is a likely place to meet with them for an hour-and-a-half after high water. In Cornish harbours there are frequently spots where pilchards are cleaned, and the entrails (a splendid bait for most sea fish) thrown into the water. Bass and many other varieties of fish are often attracted to such spots in great numbers, and may be easily taken. As a general rule, the best bass fishing is had during spring tides. While, on the coast, bass feed right in the surf, where no one but a bass fisher would expect to find fish of any kind, on calm days they may be seen basking a little way off the rocks, and at such times it is useless to fish for them; but immediately a breeze from seaward springs up causing waves to break on the rocks, disturbing the myriads of small marine creatures on which bass feed, then, knowing that food is within their reach, they at once commence to search for it, and may be successfully angled for by some of the methods described later on. A breeze from seaward, it will be noticed, gives the angler the best chance of success; but it should be borne in mind that, after a continuance of windy weather, bass, as a rule, cease to feed on the surface, and are to be taken in deeper water, close to the bottom.

From eleven in the morning until five in the evening is, generally speaking, the worst time for bass fishing—a fact which has led some people to suppose that these fish are very difficult to catch. If, however, the day is calm, and a breeze springs up from seaward, the bass, if they are off the rocks, will feed whatever the hour may be. The exact position of the fish may often be determined by watching the seagulls, for these birds follow and hover over shoals of brit, on which the bass feed, and are often to be found near.

The bass is a very ravenous fish, and its food is of the most varied description. Small fry of almost any kind, marine insects, and sandworms, probably form its staple diet. The live sand-eel is a dainty morsel which it can hardly ever resist; and in its feeding generally it much resembles its handsome inland cousin, the perch.

Fly fishing for bass, which has been practised for about half a century, is, when the fish are feeding close to the surface, by far the most sportsmanlike and pleasurable method of catching them. The sport afforded is, indeed, little inferior to salmon fishing, for the bass are almost as strong as salmon, and what little they lack in strength they fully make up for in numbers. The great difficulty is in finding the fish, for it is little use casting where they cannot be seen breaking the surface and playing, or rather feeding, in the surf. The time spent in searching need not be wasted if the angler is in a boat, for, while he is being pulled slowly along the shore, he can trail a dead sand-eel, a strip of mackerel skin, a spinning bait, or any of the thousand-and-one devices which pollack, bass, mackerel, and a few other sea fish seize when in motion. Immediately the bass are sighted the spinning rod is taken in, and the fly deftly cast into the middle of the shoal, the boat in the meantime having been sculled very quietly to windward of the fish. But this brings me to the question of tackle, which subject merits a paragraph to itself.

Almost any rod with which the line and fly can be “got out” will *do*, for it is not difficult to cast a heavy line and big fly with the wind; but anyone who wishes to have the weapon most suitable for the purpose, should provide himself

with a good greenheart, grilse or salmon rod, the length of which must depend on two considerations: first, whether the fishing is principally from the shore or a boat; and, secondly, the strength of the angler. In fishing from the shore, it is desirable to have the rod as long as the angler can easily manage; but for boat fishing, it need not be so long, as the casts are shorter; 16ft. is a very useful length. It is not an impossibility to cast a line with the cane general rod already described (page 5), but the joints should be tied after the manner of fly rods, to prevent them "throwing out." The salmon rod is, however, very desirable; it should be rather stiff, and have, if possible, the snake rings described on page 6 (failing these, large ordinary upright rings), and the revolving top ring mentioned on the same page. None of the fittings should be of steel or iron. Whether the joints are spliced or fixed into one another is immaterial; but if the latter, the ferrules should be touched with vaseline or soft soap before the rod is put together: this prevents the joints from sticking. A stiff 16ft. fly rod, in three pieces, if fitted with a stiff extra top only 6in. in length, can be converted into an 11ft. rod, suitable for almost any kind of sea fishing. From the rod we come to the line, and this may be the common eight-plait hemp line used in harbour fishing. If expense is no object, a tapered, silk, salmon line is best suited for the purpose; and though tar or indiarubber dressings have been recommended by two authorities on sea fishing, I must say that, so far as my experience goes, the usual boiled oil dressing commonly used for trolling lines appears to answer as well in salt water as in fresh. An inexpensive line is described on page 8. Bass, as I have indicated, play very strongly, sometimes running eighty yards or more of line off the reel; and as nothing is more disappointing than to lose the largest fish, I would advise not less than a hundred yards of line to be provided. An old or rotten line should never be used for this fishing; in fact, hooks, line, and gut casts should all be carefully tested before being used. I always wash my line well in fresh water before leaving the seaside, and dry it carefully. This is a very necessary precaution. A large reel will obviously

be required, and this may be a plain brass check winch, or—what I much prefer—the large Nottingham wooden reel, with a guard, and a check, which can be put either on or off, as described on page 9. A reel invented by Mr. Jardine, the well-known pike angler, is also admirably adapted for this purpose. It is of metal, contains a check, and the line on it dries more quickly than on ordinary reels, being wound round several metal bars, which allow the air to get to the very centre of it. Attached should be a gut cast, on the strength of which a good deal depends. It should not be more than three yards in length, and may consist altogether of single lengths of the thickest salmon gut. If tapered, the upper half should consist of two strands of gut laid side by side, not twisted. If strong gut cannot be obtained, the cast should be of double gut from end to end. For the benefit of those anglers who make their own casts, the knots for joining lengths of gut together are described on page 20.

The salmon fisher need not go far for flies, for any gaudy, small salmon or large sea trout fly will do admirably for bass; but if flies have to be made or purchased, any of the following patterns will be found to kill well. First I would place what is practically the well-known Alexandra, with a white wing; body thin, silver tinsel; tail, either peacock harl and a few fibres of goose feathers dyed red, or the red feathers alone; hackle, peacock herle; wing, peacock harl inclosed by two grey goose feathers. Another good fly is made with a bright-red pigswool body, rather thin, silver or gold twist; tail, a rather long piece of red hackle, using similar hackle at the shoulder; wing, two tippet feathers jungle cock on either side, and golden pheasant tail. If something simpler is desired, it will be found that the thin end of a white tail feather, lashed on the inside of the hook, so that the point comes through it, will answer almost, if not quite as well, as its more gaudy and elaborate rivals. I must not, however, forget to mention a noted bass fly—the Shaldon Shiner—for the following dressing of which I am indebted to “The Sea Fisherman:” The body, broad silver tinsel, put on as thin as possible; the tail, a small brush of scarlet feathers; green, blue, and red pigs-

wool at the shoulders; and wings, bright blue feathers, to which are added half a dozen fibres of goose feather. There is an instance on record when the bass in Dartmouth harbour refused to look at artificial sand-eels, sole-skin, or other bait, but eagerly took a well-known salmon fly called the Gold-finch. It is dressed as follows: Tag, gold tinsel and black floss; tail, a golden pheasant topping; body, gold-coloured floss; pale yellow hackle; blue jay at shoulder; gold tinsel; wing composed entirely of toppings; red macaw ribs, and

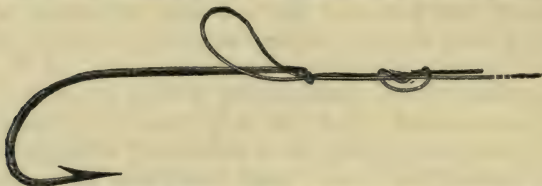


FIG. 46. METHOD OF FASTENING BASS FLIES ON EYED HOOKS TO GUT.



FIG. 47. THE KNOT PULLED TIGHT.

black head. Bass flies should always be tied on eyed hooks or loops of gut, for the gut near the head of fly quickly gets frayed and worn by the sharp teeth of the bass, and requires frequently renewing. With the old method of attaching the gut to the hook, as soon as the gut became worn, the fly, however good in other respects, at once became useless. I think the best method of attaching gut to large flies tied on eyed hooks is that shown in the accompanying Figures (46 and 47).

Major Turle's method (*see* page 15) is also very good, but more suitable for smaller flies and hooks. If the gut is not as strong as could be wished, an excellent plan is to make a loop at the end of it, and attach the fly by the method shown in the accompanying Figure (48). Two strands of gut are thus offered to the teeth of the bass, and the fly is rarely whipped off. In fishing the mouths of rivers, it is as well to use some of the better-class bass flies, for there is always the off chance of rising a salmon or sea trout on them.

The proper tackle for fly fishing having been obtained, the next question is, how and where to use it; and as fly fishing may be a novel sport to some readers of this book, it may be well for me to give a description of the usual method of casting an artificial fly. But however well the angler may understand the method, practice alone will enable him to throw a fly well. Fly fishing in salt water is not nearly so difficult as fly fishing for trout in rivers. In fishing from the shore, the angler has frequently to cast against the wind, so that it is better for the beginner to commence from a boat, which can nearly always be placed to windward of the fish. Before going out fishing, a little preliminary practice in a field is very desirable. Francis Francis wrote that it was impossible on paper to teach the tyro how to cast a salmon fly, and that he should note how it is done, and then flail away to the best of his ability until he can pitch the line out somehow. The following directions may, however, be of some service: Begin by casting a short line, about half as long again as the rod. Let the line lay on the grass; then walk back a few steps, so as to get away from it. Then stand facing the end of the line, and let the rod point a little to the right of it. To make the cast, it is necessary to first get the line behind you; and to do this, bring the rod smartly



FIG. 48. METHOD OF FASTENING ON BASS FLY TO GUT.

back over the right shoulder; but immediately the rod has reached a little beyond the perpendicular, check it suddenly, and the line flies out straight behind; then pause a second with the rod in this position (the longer the line, the longer should be the pause), and vigorously swish the point of the rod in the direction you wish to throw the fly. When, however, the rod has reached an angle of about 45° , check it, and, as the line flew out behind you, now it will shoot out in front of you, and fall lightly on the surface of the lawn, or water, as the case may be. The mistake beginners make is to wave the rod too violently, and, instead of letting the rod cast the line, they try to do it by violent movement with their arms. You do not want to whip the water, but merely to propel the fly through the air at an imaginary point a foot or so *above* that spot on the water where the fly is to fall. There is a cast used on the Spey in which the line is not allowed to fly out behind the angler, but is switched round almost in a circle. It is difficult, and requires much practice. The bass-angler should learn it, if he can find an instructor, for it is a useful cast when fishing from the shore, with high cliffs rising immediately in the rear. To do the Spey or switch cast properly, a strong stream or tide is necessary, to extend the line; but I have seen it done fairly well on still water. When the line is extended in front of the angler, it should be lifted a little off the water, the bow of the line allowed to touch the water near the angler's feet, and then switched overhand forward. I have described this and other casts at considerable length in "Angling for Game Fish."

Supposing, now, that the angler has mastered the art of casting a fly, he should next study the best means of inducing the fish to take it. If the fly is merely a white feather, it should be drawn rapidly along the surface; but if an elaborate salmon fly, it should be worked in jerks, which has the effect of alternately opening and closing the feathers and hackles, and giving the fly the appearance of life. It is usual to cast rather to the left, and then draw the fly to the right. In time the angler may learn to cast from the left shoulder, and fish, when desirable, from right to left. Immediately a rise, or

sudden tightening of the line, is seen, or a pluck at the top of the rod felt, the angler should strike, and then look out for squalls. The fish, if a large one, will probably at once run out several yards of line, and in this first endeavour to get free he should not be checked. As he slackens speed, the finger should be placed on the reel, and more strain put on him, and, as soon as possible, some line wound in. Successive runs, longer or shorter than the first, follow, until the fish, thoroughly exhausted, is brought up to the side of the boat, the landing-net placed under him, and the angler has killed his first bass.

There are some other points connected with fly fishing for bass which are worthy of notice. The boat should never be rowed through a school of these fish, for they are somewhat shy, and, unless the boat is kept at some distance, very few will be caught on the surface. When playing round pier-heads, bass often take the fly; and the shore fisher sometimes meets with success off quays, rocky headlands, and points of land at the mouths of rivers. He requires a heavy line to throw out against the wind. The best fishing is, however, usually obtained from a boat. In harbours, bass when hooked often make for old piles and stumps, from which they should be kept, so far as lies in the angler's power.

It should be remembered that bass, like trout, rarely take a fly unless there is a ripple on the water, and on calm days they should be fished for with live sand-eels or smelts. A strip of skin cut from the belly of the mackerel or bass, one end of which is lashed on to the shank of the hook, is sometimes cast like a fly, and is undoubtedly a good bait. As bass run very large, and are exceedingly strong, I look upon the use of two flies as a great mistake. Two flies do not catch more fish, and they may cause the loss of the best fish of the day. On very rough days, a large fly may be used; and when the ripple is slight, a small Shaldon Shiner will sometimes catch bass when everything else fails. In fishing narrow channels, where the tide runs strongly, on days when the bass do not show themselves, it is sometimes a good plan to let out about 40yds. of line, with a fly or a piece of mackerel-

skin at the end. The boat should be worked backwards and forwards across the tide, dropping *lower* each time the channel is crossed. The force of the stream takes out the line down the channel, and the fly, or bait, is thus presented to the fish before the boat has gone over them. In trolling for salmon on the Shannon, and other rivers, the boat is usually worked after this fashion. When flies are thus trailed, the boat should be rowed rather fast.

Casting a spinning-bait from the shore is a very deadly



FIG. 49. IMPROVED
CHAPMAN SPIN-
NER.



FIG. 50. SAND-EEL
ON CHAPMAN
SPINNER.



FIG. 51. SAND-EEL ON ORDINARY
TRAILING TACKLE.

method of taking bass. Either the general rod, or the fly rod with short top, may be used; the line must be dressed, and not too stout, and the trace figured on page 31 is very suitable for the purpose. The bait may be a sand-eel—which, by the way, need not necessarily spin—or any small fish, fixed on a Chapman spinner. Another very efficient flight for small fish, but which necessitates the use of a baiting-needle, is a large triangle at the end of a piece of gimp. The needle is hooked in the loop of the gimp, inserted at

the vent of the bait, and brought out at its mouth, and the triangle drawn up to the vent. If the sand-eel is used, it may be placed on two hooks (Fig. 51), or on the Chapman Spinner (Figs. 49, 50). If on the former tackle, the point of the lower hook is put in at the mouth, and carried down until the mouth of the bait touches the upper hook. The lower hook is then brought out through the belly of the fish, and the upper hook is put through its lips. If the lower hook is made with a long shank, which has been softened by heating in a flame, and then bent slightly, a twist will be given to the body of the bait, which will spin.

The method of using this tackle is very similar to that employed in spinning for jack in fresh water. The angler takes his stand as near the fish as he can get, lets the trace and bait hang loosely from the point of the rod, which he holds in his right hand, resting the butt against his hip. Then he uncoils some line off the reel, and, taking the rod in both hands, casts the bait out in the direction of the fish. The reel-line he holds in his left hand until the moment when the bait is just starting on its voyage through the air; he then releases the line, and the bait flies out any distance from 20yds. to 70yds., according to the expertness of the caster. This method of bass fishing is invaluable to the shore fisher, for it enables him to command a large expanse of water. It is hardly necessary to say, that as soon as the bait touches the water, the angler commences to draw in the line with his left hand (letting it run over the first finger of the right hand), and between each draw moving the rod slightly away from the bait, to keep the latter in constant motion. When all the line is drawn in, a fresh cast is made. There is a method of casting off the reel without uncoiling any line; it is described on page 71. Artificial baits are often used for spinning; among the best are red indiarubber sand-eels, Devon baits, small spoon-baits, Hearder's baby spinners, an imitation sand-eel, made out of a slip of pork-skin, soaked and scraped (*see* page 36), and a very excellent spinner known as Gregory's Clipper (illustrated on page 29). The natural bait should always be used, when obtainable. In fishing from

a boat, it is not usual to cast out the bait, but to trail it at the end of 30yds. to 40yds. of line. In trailing, or "whiffing," as it is called by professional sea fishermen, a baby spinner, with two ragworms attached by the head to the hook, forms an excellent bait. As bass feed at various depths, it is well to commence fishing the bait near the surface, gradually adding more lead until it sinks to such a depth as to be visible to the fish. The boat should, if possible, be worked across the tide, so that the fish see the bait before the boat has gone over them. The rule as to using small baits in fair weather, and large ones when the waves are high, applies as much to spinning as to fly fishing. Boats under sail frequently put out lines for bass, but the tackle used has to be very strong and heavy, and is not suitable for rod fishing.

Another excellent method of catching bass, though hardly affording the variety or sport incidental to fly fishing and spinning, is fishing with the live sand-eel or sand-smelt. For this purpose professional fishermen use a hand-line, on which light leads are strung and fixed at intervals of two fathoms, terminating with about six fathoms of fine, unleaded line, to which the hook and bait are attached. This tackle is used from a boat moored in a tideway, and the force of the current takes out the unleaded portion of the line, and, to a certain extent, the leaded portion, the amount let out depending in a great measure on the strength of the tide. In very deep water, the nearest approach the angler can make to this method is to use the sea leger described on page 24, but slightly varying it by allowing at least an extra yard of salmon gut or gimp below the lead. In this fishing there is no object in the lead sliding on a length of gimp; and if special tackle is made, it should be fixed; but the leger answers the purpose. If the current is strong, a good deal of line has to be let out to get the bait low enough in the water, and the angler must use his judgment as to the most suitable amount of lead. It is, however, advisable, when drift-line fishing, to have a second rod, on which is a line without sinkers, for it frequently happens that bass will not

feed on or near the bottom, and take the bait within a few inches of the surface. The best baits are live sand-eels, sand-smelts, or ragworms, the latter being a long way behind the former. The hook should be put in at the mouth of the sand-eel or smelt, and out at a small fraction of an inch below its gills. When ragworms have to be used, two or three are strung on to the hook through the head.

The peculiar style of fishing invented by the anglers of Nottingham, which is now finding favour on the Thames, and, indeed, all over the country, has been followed with great success by a few bass fishermen. It is peculiarly suited for fishing from pier-heads and bridges crossing estuaries or the mouths of rivers. The tackle is much the same as that illustrated on page 25, and consists of a single hook on stout salmon gut, a few small bullets, a pear-shaped pike float, and an undressed, twisted, silk line, rather finer than that used for spinning. The check must be taken off the reel (*see* page 9), and the general rod described on page 5 can be used. The bait may be any of those affected by bass, the living sand-eel standing first; the live sand-smelt is also good, and pilchard guts are excellent. A strip of silvery mackerel-skin may also be used. As a rule, the float is only placed a few feet above the bait, but occasionally it is found necessary to fish deeper. The method of using this tackle is to cast it out to where the fish are feeding, the weight of the float and sinker running the line off the reel; but if the tide will carry the bait to the fish, so much the better. The angler stands holding the rod as if about to cast a spinning bait; but he uncoils no line. His left hand clasps the rod below the reel, the right hand above it, *the little finger of the right hand pressing gently on the rim of the reel, and acting as a check to it*; at the moment of casting the bait, the pressure of the finger is taken off, to allow the reel to revolve. The art of Nottingham fishing is not learnt in a day, and, as the first few casts are apt to be erratic, the angler will do well to practise in a lonely place. After the float and bait are cast out, the angler can let the tide take them still farther out, if it seems desirable, for the light silk line will run off the reel very quickly and easily.

I have found that the top ring described on page 6 greatly facilitates the passage of the line. With Nottingham tackle, float and bait can be cast out from rocky points beyond the surf, worked along the quays, harbour walls; and, as a matter of fact, it is, in skilful hands, by far the most deadly form of float tackle known.

Last of all, we come to ordinary ground fishing, which may be carried on from boats, pier-heads, quays, and bridges, by means of a two-hook paternoster (*see* page 19), made either of stout salmon gut, double gut, or the fine Patent Gimp already mentioned, which has the advantage of being not only fine and strong, but also impervious to the sharp teeth of bass. The size of hook must, of course, depend upon the description and size of bait used. Live sand-eels, for instance, require a good-sized hook (about No. 12), while the beard of an oyster—a bait used and recommended by Mr. Sachs, a noted sea angler—rather a small one (about No. 8). Pilchard guts are good baits, and so are soft crabs, pieces of squid or cuttle, and a slice from a pilchard. Ground-baiting (*see* page 45), when it can be carried on, is very advisable, the best ground-bait being a mixture of pilchard refuse and pounded crabs. When the water is not deeper than the length of the rod, a large float may be fixed above the paternoster, and the tide allowed to carry out the tackle and baits. When the angler finds one plan unsuccessful, he should try another, and always choose that method of angling best suited to circumstances and the locality. Where no pier is available, and the bottom is not too foul, the paternoster or leger can be thrown from the shore; but (excepting, of course, the mouths of rivers and quiet estuaries), owing to the wash of the waves, so heavy a lead is usually required to keep out the bait that the rod can rarely be used. At Deal, the tackle described in Chapter IV., page 54, is used for this purpose, and some very good takes of bass are made with it. Pieces of cuttle, squid, or strips of mackerel-skin, on account of their toughness, are good baits for use on tackle which has to be cast any great distance. Casting from the beach is often practised when it is too rough to go afloat.

There is only one other method of catching bass of interest to the angler with which I am acquainted, and I only know of it by repute. It is followed, I believe, off Brixham. The tackle consists of a long, stout, unleaded line, and a No. 3 or 4 Exeter Round bend hook, attached to a short piece of strong snooding. The other end of the snooding is attached to the eye of a baiting-needle, by means of which it is put in at the mouth of the bait (any small fish 5in. or 6in. in length) and out at its tail. The tail has a turn of thread put round it, to keep the bait from slipping up the line; the snooding is attached to the main line, and the tackle is ready. Professionals fish with five or six of these lines, mooring their boats across the tide, at some spot where they expect to meet with bass. The baits are thrown out, fall by their own weight to the bottom, and lie there until taken by the fish. The method is very similar to trolling with the gorge-bait in fresh water for jack, and I have no doubt that ordinary trolling might be practised in the sea with success. The hooks should, however, project much farther from the gills of the bait than is usual in jack fishing.

Should the angler feel puzzled with so many different methods to choose from, I would say, first let him study the habits of the fish, and, aided by information from local people, form some idea of the most likely spots on the coast to find them. Having determined this point to his satisfaction, let him consider which plan will enable him, in the most simple manner, to place the bait before the eyes of the bass. If he has a boat at his disposal, and can see the fish sporting in the surf, he will probably try fly fishing. If he fishes from a pier, he may also fly-fish if the bass are visible, paternostering, spinning, or live-baiting if they are feeding on the bottom or in mid-water.

I have treated the subject of bass fishing at length, and in detail, not only because the fish offers an exceptional amount of sport to the angler, but also because several of the methods described are followed in angling for other varieties of fish, and will be referred to hereafter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POLLACK

(WHITING-POLLACK, WHITING-COLE, AND LYTHE);

THE COALFISH

(RACE, RAUNING - POLLACK, SAITHE, COALSEY,
PODLER, PILTOCK, PAR, BILLET, STEDLOCK,
CUDDEN, COOTH, SILLOCK, HARBIN).

*Appearance—Habits—Food—Coalfish—Methods of Angling for
Pollack and Coalfish—Fly-fishing—Spinning and Trailing
—Sand-eels on Float Tackle—Ground-fishing.*



THE pollack, or lythe of Scotland, vies with the bass for the first place in the estimation of the sea-angler. Though possessing great strength, which it does not disdain to use, it is not so lively a fighter when hooked as its rival, but compensates in a measure for this by its size, dogged perseverance to break the tackle, and wide distribution, being met with in great numbers all round the British coast. In appearance it is not unlike the whiting, but deeper and somewhat different in colour. Its back is olive-brown, paling into a yellowish white on the belly. When fresh out of the sea it has handsome, dark, glistening eyes. About 15lb. is a very large fish; specimens have been caught 20lb. weight. Where they run large, the angler may find his take average 3lb. or 4lb. each. Those caught in harbours are, as a rule, quite small.

Pollack are found, as I have said, all round our coasts,

but more particularly where rocks are plentiful. In some respects they resemble trout, haunting rocky headlands which stretch far out to sea, and round which the tide sets strongly, rising to a fly in the evening, and taking both live and dead bait, and natural or artificial spinning baits. Spring affords the best pollack fishing on the South-west coast of England—March, April, May, June; while in Ireland and the North of Scotland large pollack are also caught in September. Like many other fish of prey, they seem to follow the herrings. While these are out at sea, few pollack will be found in their usual haunts; but when the herrings enter the sea lochs of the Scotch coast, their pursuers come in after them, and are to be caught in great numbers. In the winter, the greater portion of these fish retire into deep water; but in the spring they come inshore, the small ones leading the way—at least, this is what I have been told by fishermen; but it rather conflicts with a statement that pollack spawn in winter close to the shore. As a matter of fact, they are occasionally caught off pier-heads in winter. Their habits vary a good deal in different localities. A good chart, showing the position of sunken rocks, or a sailor well versed in the subject, is a very useful addition to the outfit of the pollack angler, for many fish will be found haunting sunken reefs at a considerable distance from land. From my angling experiences I should imagine that pollack feed on or near the bottom during the day, hiding in seaweed, and rushing out to seize any unfortunate little fish which passes within reach; and that in the evening they come out from their lairs, and roam about in search of food. Whether this be so or not—and it is difficult either to prove or disprove it—I have generally caught them best in the daytime when my bait has been close to the bottom, and in the evening when it has been in mid-water, or near the top.

The favourite food of pollack must be, I fancy, sand-eels, for they are the bait with which the best sport is obtained; but it must be confessed that pollack do not, as a rule, dwell where sand-eels are plentiful, though occasionally they leave their rocky fastnesses for a short stay on a sandy bottom, where they banquet to their heart's content on the silvery

launce. Sea worms of various kinds they take, but their staple diet is probably small fish.

A word or two now as to the coalfish, called *saithe* in Scotland, which resembles the pollack in so many respects that I have placed the two in one chapter. They may be distinguished from each other by slight differences of shape and colour. The coalfish is the rounder of the two; the colour of its back varies from dark green to blue; its lateral line and belly are white. Placed side by side, the points in which they differ are easily discernible; but apart, especially when small, the two fish are often mistaken for one another. As will be seen from the heading to this chapter, the coalfish has a large variety of local names. In habits it closely resembles the pollack, and may be angled for in the same fashion. As a matter of fact, people who go out fishing for the one look upon catching some of both as a matter of



FIG. 52. CUDDY FLY.

course. This last remark does not apply to the English Channel, where coalfish are not plentiful. In the North and North-east they abound, and the angler who fly-fishes in Scotch sea lochs for pollack often finds the number of cuddies, as youthful coalfish are termed locally, so great as to be quite a nuisance. From three to five dozen are sometimes taken in an evening,

not one of them over three-quarters of a pound. In Fig. 52 is shown a good cuddy fly. The wings are grey or white; body, white wool, ribbed with gold tinsel; and the tail, red wool. In Yorkshire cuddies are called parrs. The adult coalfish, however, is not to be despised, for it grows to a great size, being sometimes taken as heavy as 30lb. It is about as good to eat as the pollack, which, when in good condition, fresh, and carefully boiled, is rather better than second-rate cod. It should be skinned or well scraped before being cooked.

Among the various methods of angling for pollack and

coalfish I put fly fishing first, for though the largest takes are not, as a rule, made in that way, still the sport obtained is very superior, and the angler has to exercise some skill prior to hooking the fish, instead of being merely rowed about holding a rod or line, and waiting for the fish to hook themselves. Fly rod, line, and casts I have already described (*see* Chapter V.), and I need only here say as to the former, that it must be stiff and strong, and that both line and cast must be capable of holding a 12lb. fish in his first attempt to run out line. That pollack *must* be held is a maxim which the sea angler cannot learn too soon; there is little or no playing them. Give a pollack line, and down he goes straight to his lair among rocks and seaweed, and, once there, you may bid him, and a portion of your tackle, farewell, at least for that day. It is the rarest thing possible to get a pollack out of his stronghold, unless the water is so shallow that the fish can be reached with an oar. I only once remember getting a large one out of the seaweed in deep water, and, for the benefit of other anglers who may be some time or another similarly situated, will relate how it happened. We—I had a friend with me—had been spinning, or rather trailing, on the North-west coast of Scotland, not far from Cape Wrath. Five or six fish, varying from 3lb. to 10lb. in weight, had been brought on board, when my friend suddenly had his rod dragged almost out of his hand, and, before he could recover himself, the fish was at the bottom, fast and firm as if moored there. It was clearly a big fish, so we tried all we knew to get him; but the sweeps were not long enough to reach to the bottom, and rowing the boat round the spot, so as to pull the line from various directions, which is sometimes successful, was of no avail. Finally I bethought me of a plan which is tried in the Galway river when salmon make for the arch of the bridge—a proceeding which usually ends in their breaking the tackle. Having made the boatman understand that I wanted the boat placed right over the fish—a difficult matter, as he understood very few words of English—I asked my friend to lay down his rod, took the line in my right hand, and pulled as hard as I dared. At the same

time, I took a few coils of slack line in my left hand, and after having pulled at the fish for about a minute, suddenly let go, at the same instant casting the slack line overboard. For a moment or two nothing happened, and then the line commenced to move slowly through the water—the ruse had succeeded, and the pollack, imagining itself free, was swimming away. Quickly seizing the line, I brought the fish, before he had time to find out his mistake, to the surface, where, after a few desperate struggles, he was gaffed. He was as large as any we took that day.

But to return to fly-fishing. The tackle, as I have said, must be strong. For big fish, ordinary salmon-gut is not strong enough—it should be double; but for the smaller fish which are usually caught in harbours and off pier-heads, single salmon gut will do. As pollack usually feed near the bottom during the daytime, the fly rod is only useful in the evening. The fly can be cast from the rocks and off pier-heads, but most fish are taken from a boat, which should be rowed within casting distance of rocky points, reefs, and the places where the fish are to be found. When a big pollack takes the fly, he comes up with a splash, such as a dog would make leaping into the water, and immediately he feels the hook goes straight for the bottom—don't let him get there! Sometimes lazy anglers let out thirty yards or so of line, and trail their flies behind the boat. Pollack and coalfish are often caught this way, as also are bass, mackerel, and, very occasionally, herrings.

Spinning, trailing, whiffing, and railing are carried on for pollack and coalfish in much the same manner as described in the chapter on bass. There is, however, one great difference. During the day pollack feed near the bottom, and therefore the line must be heavily leaded. If the fish are not being caught (I am supposing that the tide is right—flowing—and that the angler is on a well-known pollack ground), the fault will probably lie in insufficient leads. By the method I have explained on page 31, leads can be added to the trace *ad infinitum*. It is a good thing to keep on adding weight until it is found that the hooks catch occasionally in the bottom. All that is then necessary is to shorten

the line a little, which has the effect of raising the bait a foot or two. This refers to trailing from a boat. If the angler is spinning from rocks, as he very well can, casting out after the manner described in Chapter V., he can fish near the bottom by allowing his bait, when cast out, to sink before commencing to draw it back. Casting from the shore is as useful in pollack as in bass fishing, and is not half so well known as it ought to be.

The best natural bait for spinning is the sand-eel; next, but not far distant, is a young conger about 6in. or 7in. long. It is a most killing bait, and the great success of the red indiarubber sand-eel, as it is called, is no doubt owing to its resemblance to this fish. Neither sand-eels nor other small eels need spin. Both ragworms and lobworms are also used as whiffing baits (*see* page 29). Any small fish, mounted on a Chapman spinner (*see* page 29), will take pollack and coal-fish, and any glittering or gaudy artificial bait will be found killing. The Clipper bait already mentioned (*see* page 29) is excellent, but hardly so good as a red phantom minnow, about 4in. long. The indiarubber band bait (*see* page 29) is also very good. Perhaps the best artificial bait of all is the red indiarubber sand-eel, either with or without a baby spinner at the head. It is usually mounted on one large hook. I find the addition of a large triangle to this bait, mounted on three inches of gimp, a great advantage.

Professional fishermen, and also amateurs, sometimes go pollack fishing in sailing vessels. In that case, success depends principally on the boat going over the right ground, and the lines being sufficiently leaded. As a rule, a lead of one, and sometimes two pounds weight, is necessary, when, I need hardly say, a rod cannot be used. Trailing a bait behind a sailing boat is called reeling, or railing; behind a rowing boat, whiffing. I have preferred to use the fresh-water terms in this book, as the methods described originated in fresh-water angling. A very curious bait is used for pollack in Torbay. It is called the Belgian grub, and consists of a plaster of Paris caterpillar, moulded on the shank of a hook, painted yellow or white, with a red head. Three or four of

these are placed on a line, like a cast of flies, and trailed after the boat, a cut rubber band being placed on the hook of the end grub.

The most deadly way of taking pollack and coalfish is with the living sand-eel, baited and used according to the methods described in the last chapter. In shallow water, float tackle, heavily leaded, can be used; but in deep water, the same tackle, less the float, and with the addition of a yard of gut below the leads, is better. The bait and line are carried out by the force of the tide, and so much line should be let out that the bait is a fourth of the way from the bottom. A knowledge of the depth must first be obtained by sounding. A good deal of judgment is necessary in letting out the line, and practice alone will teach the angler the proper quantity to let out. Where the water is under 20ft. deep, I prefer float tackle, for the float can be put about as far from the lead as the water is deep. This would seem to bring a foot or so of line on the bottom; but, as a matter of fact, directly the float is checked the tide carries out the line below the float, and the bait is lifted several feet. Float tackle can sometimes be very successfully used from the shore, especially if cast out in the Nottingham fashion. Off an ordinary beach or sandy shore no one should dream of casting out tackle for pollack; but where there is an inlet of the sea, with steep hills coming down to the water's edge, and deep water within a few feet of the shore—there, and in such-like places, pollack may often be taken with float tackle. If sand-eels cannot be obtained, two ragworms, hooked through the head, or live shrimps, may be tried, but they are not nearly so good. To keep the shrimps alive, it is necessary to float them in a small wooden box with holes bored in it. They are hooked through the tail. In fishing from pier-heads, when the tide is very slack, it is sometimes a good plan to let out a gut line and hook, without leads of any description, baited with ragworms or sand-eels. The slight tide carries out the bait, and pollack are often taken after this manner. I have already described the drift-lines which are used by professional fishermen for taking bass, pollack, &c. They have no advantage over the tackle

just mentioned, beyond, perhaps, the fact that they bear small leads at every two fathoms, which tell the fisherman how much line he has let out.

Concerning ground-line fishing for pollack and coalfish, there is very little to be added to what has already been said on the subject in Chapters IV. and V. The paternoster is the most useful tackle for the purpose, and the bait may be pilchard entrails, or a piece of pilchard on shank of hook, with the guts on the point. Ragworms and live shrimps are also very good, and mussels will occasionally be taken. In harbours and other places where fish run small, salmon gut will be strong enough; but where big fish are expected, double salmon gut, or the Patent Gimp, will be advisable. Pollack often gorge the bait, so a disgorging will be found necessary. A good one is illustrated on page 33.

Before concluding this chapter, let me repeat that the tackle for pollack and coalfish must be strong and reliable; that the fish must on no account be allowed to dive into the weeds, but be given the butt unmercifully; that the angler can hardly fish too near the bottom in the daytime; and that the living sand-eel is the most deadly bait. I have said nothing as to the sizes of hooks, because they vary so with the bait used and the size of fish expected. The largest hook in the scale shown on page 17 is not too large for a 10lb. pollack; but a smaller hook, if good, will hold him, and more fish will be caught on it than on a large one if a small bait, such as a live shrimp, is used.



CHAPTER VII.

GREY MULLET.

Habits—Food—Various Methods of Surface Angling—Mid-water and Bottom Fishing—Fly-fishing.



Of the sea-fish sought after by the angler, the grey mullet is probably the most difficult to capture. It is very generally distributed, and having a great fancy for brackish water, particularly that containing a slight admixture of sewage matter, is to be found in large numbers in harbours, docks, and estuaries. It sometimes grows to 10lb. in weight, or even larger; but the general run is from 1lb. to 3lb. It gives good sport when hooked, and is very good eating. Its natural food seems to be vegetable refuse, worms, and certain kinds of seaweed, particularly that growing on ships' bottoms and wood piles. Shoals of mullet will sometimes follow a ship which is about to be overhauled, right into the dock, working up and down its slimy bottom with their noses. They do not disdain animal matter, but in one point are very particular—the food must be soft. The baits which they will at times take are varied in character, and include gentles, ragworms; peeled, unboiled shrimps; soft, fat pork; thornback's liver, pilchard guts, wasp grubs, bread, paste, boiled cabbage, and green silkweed.

Grey mullet are caught at Southampton, Dover, Jersey, Plymouth, along the coast of the Mediterranean, and in many other places; but there are certain spots where, though very plentiful, they are rarely taken—Oulton Broad, for example—the reason probably being that the right bait has

not yet been discovered. For one angler who catches grey mullet there are ten who fail; and the failure is often owing to ignorance of a very important fact concerning these fish: they are so shy, that they usually refuse a bait unless distributed around is a quantity of food of which the bait seems a part; in other words, ground-bait is necessary,

In summer, when the weather is warm, grey mullet are often found feeding on the surface, but in cold weather they feed deeper. During the winter they sometimes bite well in harbours, a light gut paternoster, with very small hooks, baited with ragworms, being used to take them; but even then ground-bait is necessary, and the large fish will not come well on the feed without it. Grey mullet feed very badly in brackish water, and are more easily caught in the sea near breakwaters, piers, and other structures, round the lower portions of which they find their food. A good many are taken from Plymouth breakwater.

A very certain method of surface fishing, when the sea is calm, was described by Mr. Collier James, in the *Fishing Gazette*, about two years ago. For bait he used the tough, upper crust of a newly-baked, plain, bread bun, prepared by removing the crumb, and cutting the crust in strips about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, which were kept in a covered tin for a few hours to toughen. When baiting, strips $\frac{3}{4}$ in. long were torn off, and the hooks, which were small, given one turn through them. For ground-bait, he had breadcrumbs. His main line was of horsehair, terminated by a length of twisted gut. No leads were used, and small pieces of cork were attached along the line at intervals. If the fish were not visible, his plan was to row very quietly about spots frequented by them, scattering a few breadcrumbs here and there. If there were any mullet they would, after the boat had passed, come up to the surface, and feed on the breadcrumbs, which were only thrown out to discover the position of the fish. The next thing was to lay out the line (the mullet would, of course, disappear while this was being done), scatter a few breadcrumbs round the baits, and row a distance of thirty or forty yards, paying out the line for that distance.

After a little while, the mullet would again come to the surface, take the bait, and be caught. The principal object of having a hair line was because no rod was used, hair possessing much elasticity, and therefore greatly favouring the fisherman who plays a fish with his hand. I see no reason why a rod should not be used with this tackle; it would be a decided advantage in striking and playing the fish. Very few corks are necessary for this kind of fishing, if the line is fine, and *well greased*. A well greased line will float for a long time on the surface of the water; quite as well, indeed, as if corks were strung along it. The best grease for the purpose is the kidney fat of a red deer. It is kept at several fishing-tackle shops in London for the dry-fly fishermen of Hampshire. Mutton kidney fat, melted with a little pure paraffin, answers very nearly as well; in fact, nearly any grease will do.

A somewhat similar tackle to that just described is used by local anglers at Nice. The main line is of horsehair, tapered to three hairs at the fine end; the hook, which is attached to gut, is small, and the bait, a piece of bread or a ragworm. Along the line, at intervals of 1ft., are a series of corks about the size of peas; the lowest, which is as big as a hazel nut, is about two-and-a-half feet above the bait. A very long rod is used. The angler usually wades in, rod in one hand, hook in the other, and, with a gentle sweep of the arm, casts the bait out beyond the surf.

Once, on Dover pier, I saw a man angling for grey mullet in a highly artistic manner, which proved successful. His rod was long and light, and his line of twisted silk a trifle thicker than that used on the Trent for chub, and not quite three times as thick as ordinary sewing thread. At the end of the line was a three-yard length of gut, half as thick as salmon gut. He used three small hooks (about No. 10), one at the end of the gut, the others as droppers. There were three tiny cork floats on the line, and no sinkers. The sketch (Fig. 53) shows their position and appearance. The end hook he baited with the green weed found on piles in harbours, the others with paste made from stale bread. The day was quite

calm, and the fish could be seen. He cast his tackle a few yards off the fish, in such a way that the tide gradually worked the baits over them, a handful of breadcrumbs being first thrown into the water to bring them on the feed. Fishing from a height, the line above the corks was easily kept from sinking. If the same tackle was used from a boat, the line would have to be greased. I do not think better tackle than this can possibly be devised for surface fishing for mullet in summer. As these fish play strongly, and must not be held tightly, having delicate mouths, from which the hook easily breaks away, it is advisable to have not less than 60yds. or 70yds. of running line. The point which the angler has to aim at in this kind of fishing is to get the ground-bait and tackle over the fish, at the same time keeping as far away from them as possible. Any noise or splashing of oars will

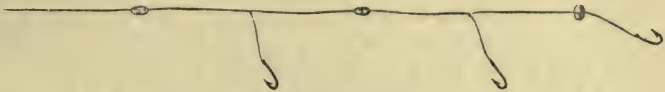


FIG. 53. GREY MULLET SURFACE TACKLE.

to a certainty frighten grey mullet, as they are particularly susceptible to sound. For instance, when gunnery practice is being carried on from Dover Castle, it is rarely any good fishing for mullet from the Admiralty Pier.

A word more as to baits, and this portion of the subject is complete. Common flour paste is not a good bait, ordinary soaked bread being far better. The bread cannot be too wet, or the bait too soft, so long, of course, as it will stop on the hook. Very small portions should be used, not much larger than a pea. Boiled and unboiled shrimps and prawns, peeled, are useful baits *when* the angler can use the chervin ground-bait described on page 45. Pilchard guts are also very good, the angler ground-baiting with the same substance chopped up very small. When one thing fails, another should be tried. As a general ground-bait, pounded crabs are decidedly good. To speak of substances thrown on the water, which

are intended to keep the fish near the surface, and lull their suspicions, as ground-bait, is, strictly speaking, incorrect; but anything in the way of fish food other than the hook-bait, thrown in by the angler, is usually so termed, and I see no reason to invent new expressions for the purposes of this book.

Fishing for grey mullet on the bottom, or at mid-water, does not require a lengthy description. In harbours and quiet waters generally, very light tackle should be used; the gut fine, but not *fine drawn*; and the float a porcupine quill, tipped with red paint, and so weighted with split shot, placed 1 ft. above the hook, that only the red tip of the float is showing above the water. Any fine silk running line will do. A large variety of baits and ground-baits have already been given. Among the best for harbour fishing are ragworms and peeled, unboiled shrimps. If there is any current, the ground-bait should be placed in a small net, with a stone or two, and let down into the water with a cord, the tackle being placed about two yards below it, so that the stream washes the ground-bait by the hook. When it can be managed, the net should not be used, but the ground-bait cast in loose.

Grey mullet, as I have said, sometimes feed on the surface, sometimes on the bottom. They also often feed at mid-water, working up and down piles which are covered with weed, rooting in it with their noses. For mid-water fishing a small float is advisable; but when this, after a careful trial, fails, the angler should try fishing on the bottom. He may then either leger with bread paste, or place his float a foot farther from the hook than the water is deep (a plummet for testing the depth is shown on page 34). The hook link of gut will then lie on the bottom. He should use ground-bait, and strike at the slightest movement of the float. A paternoster of fine gut, with small hooks, can be used instead of float tackle, and in quite still water it is sometimes cast in without the lead.

Our foreign friends, who in most matters piscatorial are far behind us, have rather the advantage of us in mullet fishing. I have already described how mullet are caught at Nice and

other places in the Mediterranean. At San Sebastian an elaborate ground-bait is made of chopped heads of sardines, potatoes, and clay, squeezed into balls. Immediately this is thrown in, the hook, baited with a very small square of salted tunny, follows, and good sport is obtained.

Fly fishing for grey mullet in the daytime, though it is often tried, is rarely successful. The fish will follow a fly, but will rarely seize it. At night the fly fisher stands a better chance, and will now and again take a few fish on a white moth. The dressing of a night fly for mullet was described in the following letter, published in the *Fishing Gazette* of June 18, 1887:—

“Sir,—I believe there are some rivers—generally shallow ones—in which mullet will not take a bait. With regard to flies, I have taken some mullet at night with a silver-bodied moth: wing, owl’s feather; hackle, white; tail, a bit of kid or wash leather. The body should be first wrapped with wool, to make it fat, and the tinsel wound over it.

“In the *Gazette* of September 3, 1881, Mr. J. D. Dougal says that ‘a man used to take them on the Clyde with a white fly, on the hook of which he put the bivalved oval spout fish, called on the Clyde *Garrocher*, the scientific name being *Mya arenaria*. Part of the flesh of this—probably the spout, which is exceedingly tough—he put on his fly. He angled at low water, and took numbers, from 3lb. to 5lb. each.’

“I think this plan would be worth a trial where the *Mya arenaria* can be got, and I believe it is common on the British coast.

“I am, &c.,

E. GOSLING.

“Aberffraw, Anglesey, June 13.”

A gentle placed on a hook might be cast as a fly with success, provided a few gentles were thrown among the fish, to make them feed on that bait. I have not tried the experiment.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MACKEREL.

Habits — Whifing and Trailing — Fishing from a Boat at Anchor—What Not to Do.



HIS fish is good to catch, to eat, and to look at, and therefore takes a high place in the angler's estimation. It is so well known that any description would be superfluous. It abounds on the coasts of the more southern portions of these isles, and is found, but in less quantities, in the North. Some millions are caught annually in nets and on lines; but enough and to spare are left to meet the requirements of anglers. Formerly, mackerel were supposed to leave our shores during the winter months, and migrate to some unknown region in the North; but it seems probable that they merely retire into deeper water during the cold weather, for they are now taken off the British coast at all seasons of the year. The angler, however, if well advised, will not trouble to seek them in winter, and will probably obtain his best sport during the hottest months of summer.

Mackerel feed at various depths, but are mostly taken within a few feet of the surface, when feeding on shoals of small fry called "brit" or "bret" in Devonshire, and "mint" at Hastings. Sometimes they come so close to the shore that the fishermen run out a seine net and inclose thousands at one haul. On a hot, sunny day, they may be seen breaking the surface, and capital sport may then be obtained by casting gaudy flies among them from a boat, or from the shore if they are near enough. The fish run

about 1½lb. to 2lb. in weight, so that very strong tackle is not necessary; what is known as stout lake gut is quite strong enough. If salmon gut is used, the fish can be dragged in quicker, and a larger take will be made, unless the wind is light, when most fish will be taken on the finer tackle. The cast should be 3yds. long, and two or three flies may be used. The extra flies are called droppers, and are best attached to the line according to the method shown in the diagram (Fig. 54), the main length of gut being served with silk under the knot; or the dropper may be placed in the centre of a buffer knot. The fly for cuddy, with a thinner body, answers admirably for mackerel. If the fish do not take the fly well, remove the tail fly from the cast, put in its place a No. 13 hook, and pass the point through one end of a strip of mackerel skin (*see page 40*). The bait should be cast and worked, like a fly, in little jerks, which gives it the resemblance of

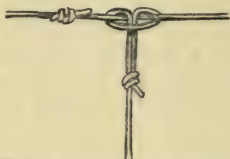


FIG. 54. METHOD OF FASTENING DROPPERS ON TO FLY LINES.

a small fish struggling to escape from its pursuers. The strip of skin is sometimes called a "last," or "lask," and should not be cut straight down the side of the fish, but in a slanting direction, so that half is belly skin—silver—and half side skin—blue. It is the best of all baits for mackerel, whether cast as a fly or trailed after a boat. Mackerel fishermen often carry a wine cork or bung, on which they lay the last, and then stick the point of the hook through it. Beyond referring the reader to the remarks on fly fishing and tackle in Chapters II. and V., I need only add that, if the fish disappear below the surface, the angler, if he has no whiffing or spinning tackle with him, should add a light lead at the junction of the main line with the cast, and, letting out about 30yds. of line, trail his flies, at the rate of three miles an hour, until he falls in with another shoal of fish. If they are feeding on the surface, he may take off the lead and cast for them as before; but if they do not show themselves, he should continue rowing backwards and

forwards over the spot where they seem to be. It is more desirable to row across than with or against the tide, as by so doing the line does not follow quite in the wake of the boat. A spinning bait, or the "last," rigged on a lightly-leaded trace, and cast out into a shoal, after the manner described in Chapter V., answers quite as well as fly fishing. The bait may be natural or artificial—a small spoon, Hearder's Baby spinner, a silver Devon minnow—in fact, anything lively in motion and bright in appearance.

Next comes the question, What is the angler to do if no shoals of mackerel are visible? In that case, he must invoke the assistance of an experienced local fisherman, who will take him to the spots frequented by the fish, which spots, by the way, vary with the season, being nearer shore in July and August than in the colder months. Once on the mackerel ground, the boat is sailed or rowed across the tide until the fish are met with, when it is kept moving, as long as possible, through the shoal. The spinning tackle used in bass fishing answers admirably for mackerel, but for fishing from a rowing boat, it need not be so strong. When under sail it is not usual to bring the boat to land every fish; and to haul a 2lb. mackerel up to the side of a boat which is going through the water at three or four miles an hour requires fairly strong tackle—good salmon gut is usually strong enough. Rods are not much used in mackerel fishing from sailing vessels; still, where the boat is travelling slowly, and the fish are near the surface, they have their advantages. The constant hauling in of thick, wet, sea lines with the hands is, to my mind, a thing to be avoided on all possible occasions. But there are times—when the fish are feeding deep down, and 2lb., 3lb., and even 5lb. leads are used—when the rod must be laid aside. Hand-line tackle for railing or whiffing is illustrated in the chapter on tackle, at page 32. In fishing from a rowing boat, a lead of 1oz. (unless the line is very coarse) will generally be found quite heavy enough; but if the trace is made according to the principle described on page 31, other leads can be added, if necessary. When the fish are not found at one depth, other depths should be tried. About

thirty yards of line is quite enough to let out behind the boat—in fact, a shorter line will occasionally lead to more fish being caught, as winding in a great length of line often consumes valuable time. The only respects in which spinning or trailing tackle for mackerel differs from that used for bass is in being finer, and in the length of gut below the lead being longer—2yds. to 5yds. in length. A cloudy sky is generally considered best for mackerel fishing, but a bright day will answer nearly as well, if the angler's tackle is fine.

I have already described what is commonly considered the best trailing bait—the “last”; but I am inclined to think that a sand-eel, baited as shown on page 28, Fig. 27, or cut in half just before being dropped into the water, the head half only being used, is nearly as good. Any bit of fish-skin will do, if bright, and not too stiff—*e.g.*, a piece cut from a gurnard. When using any baits of this character, unless the fish are biting freely, it is well to jerk the line slightly every minute or so, an action which gives a very life-like motion to the piece of fish-skin. The artificial baits which mackerel will take are legion. Anything that spins, is bright or highly coloured, and not too large, they will rush at eagerly. When unprovided with bait—a not infrequent occurrence—a strip of handkerchief is sometimes placed on the hook, to be replaced by the “last” immediately a mackerel is caught. A piece of clay pipe stem on the hook shank is much believed in by some fishermen. If the Devon minnow is used, it is best to have it either all silver or all gold, and to have the hooks mounted on fine gimp. It is ordinarily made with four triangles of hooks; but these are too many for mackerel fishing. A couple of hooks, lashed together at the tail, and a triangle on each side, will be found more than sufficient—in fact, the latter may be dispensed with. If a number of triangles are used, too much time is lost in unhooking the fish.

It is asserted by fishermen, that when two lines are out, and mackerel are hooked on each, both fish should not be hauled in at once, but that one fish should be left out for the shoal

to follow, until the other is taken off the line, and the hook—rebaited if necessary—returned to the water. The natural supposition would be that the struggles of a hooked fish would alarm its companions; but fish are incomprehensible things, and there may be something in the idea. It is a well-known fact that perch and chub will follow a hooked brother to the very side of the boat; and there are instances on record of jack, trout, and salmon, when in pairs, having suffered by their devotion for a dying comrade, by meeting an inglorious death in the landing-net or on the gaff.

The methods already described are those most commonly in use; but during the months of August, September, and October, mackerel may be fished for with some success from a boat at anchor. The best bait is a small live sand-eel, and the tackle is similar to that used for pollack, a description of which is given in Chapter VI. It is, of course, made up finer, as the fish are smaller. If the sand-eels run large, they should be cut in half. When fishing for pollack and bass with sand-eels, the angler may sometimes find his hook robbed of the bait in an inexplicable manner. When this happens, a very small sand-eel, or half a large one, should be put on the hook, and shortly afterwards a shining mackerel will very likely be lifted over the side. In ground fishing for mackerel the bait should, as a rule, be kept near bottom. If the water is deep, no float can be used; but if the depth is 20ft. or less, a float is an advantage. The depth should always be taken before commencing to fish, and the line adjusted accordingly. If the fish are not found near the bottom, other depths should be tried. Off the Channel Islands, many mackerel are caught in this way at night, particularly when it is moonlight. If sand-eels cannot be obtained, pilchard guts should be used. It is not a bad plan to run a piece of squid up the shank of the hook, and put some pilchard gut on the point. Failing these baits, there are ragworms and mussels; but they are not nearly so good, and I am inclined to think that the beard of an oyster would be better. If the tide runs strongly, a strip of mackerel skin may be tried, cut, and placed on the hook in the manner

already described, and worked vigorously in the water, to make it as life-like as possible.

When mackerel are close in shore, during the early autumn, they may often be taken from pierheads and in harbours in the manner just described, and more during the night than the day. In these positions ground-bait should be used, pilchard or herring refuse being the best. It can be let down in a net close to the bait, and the cord shaken occasionally.

American mackerel fishermen use ground-bait largely, having mills in which herrings are pounded up for the purpose. When the mackerel have been attracted together, a bright metal fish, well armed with hooks, is let down among them and jigged about; it is eagerly taken by the fish.

So much, then, for what to do. A few lines on what not to do, and the chapter is at an end. Do not, when yachting with a friend, and his beautiful craft is making her eight knots an hour—do not then get out the spinning rod, and a trace bearing a $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. lead, and patiently sit watching your spoon-bait skip from wave-top to wave-top, as the yacht dashes through the water. Rather, if your friend wants a fish or two, induce him to shorten sail and to take a very slow turn across the tide, you, meanwhile, having either put a $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. lead on your trace, or prepared a hand-line, bearing a lead weighing 1lb. or more, according to the pace at which the yacht is going. On meeting with fish, change the artificial for a "last," and sail through the shoal backwards and forwards as long as possible. If your friend won't reduce sail at your request, some good may be done with a very strong hand-line and a 5lb., or even heavier, lead.

CHAPTER IX.

SOME OTHER SEA-FISH.

*Braize—Bream—Brill—Chad—Cod—Conger—Dab—Dogfish—
Dory—Flounder—Garfish—Gurnard—Haddock—Hake—
Halibut—Herring—Horse Mackerel—Ling—Plaice—Poor
Cod—Red Mullet—Sea Trout—Skate—Smelt—Sole—Turbot
—Whiting—Whiting Pout—Wrasse.*



IN preceding chapters I have described at length, and in detail, various methods by which bass, pollack, grey mullet, and mackerel—the four fish most highly esteemed by the angler—are to be captured, and have also devoted a chapter to sea-fishing and angling generally. By the methods described, with a few slight modifications, almost any of the fish which are found on our coasts may be caught; and therefore, in running quickly through a number of British sea-fish, I propose to make my remarks as concise as possible, and to avoid needless repetition. Should the reader be in doubt as to how to set about catching any of the fish described, —a state of things which it will be my duty to prevent as far as possible—I would advise him to read carefully the earlier chapters, and instead of endeavouring to find instructions, and to copy them to the smallest detail—in other words, to fish by rule of thumb—let him rather obtain general ideas on the subject, and apply them with what modifications circumstances may make necessary. Given a piece of salt water containing a certain kind of fish—the problem being how to catch them—the first thing to do is to consider what bait they will take; and, secondly, the best means of placing

that bait before them. With reference to the first point, the experience of others must be the guide; but as to the other, the angler having determined at what depth the fish probably are, must so arrange his tackle that the bait reaches them. For instance, in shallow water the float tackle can be used, heavily leaded if the tide be strong, lightly if it be slack. If the fish are bottom feeders, the float must be arranged so as to bring the bait on the bottom, or the leger, or paternoster with lowest hook close to the lead, may be used. For very deep water heavy leads are necessary, and for deep water combined with a strong tide, very heavy leads. As a matter of fact, everything depends on circumstances, which vary with the season and locality; and the man who has not the intelligence to adapt his tackle and methods of fishing to circumstances, need never expect to become an angler. Apologising for this slight digression, I have only to add that, for convenience of reference, the fish in this chapter are arranged alphabetically.

The Braize or Becker.—This fish is a member of the bream family, and is not taken in large quantities on our coasts. Its back is blue, sides and belly silvery. It feeds both on the bottom and in mid-water, and, as it has a partiality for mussels and ragworms, is sometimes taken by pout and whiting fishers on their paternosters or hand-lines. It is not often specially fished for.

The Bream, Chad-bream, Brim, or Red Gilt-head.—The sea bream is a large, handsome fish, somewhat prickly to handle, and poor to eat. It is found all round our coasts in large numbers, but is most abundant off Sussex, Devon, and Cornwall. The largest fish, weighing five or six pounds, are, as a rule, only caught so far out at sea that the depth of water renders angling impossible. Hand-lines with heavy leads are generally used, the bait being kept two or three feet from the bottom. Where the water is not too deep, bream may be taken on the rod with paternoster tackle, but in shallow water it is almost useless to angle for any but very small fish during the day. In deep water, when there is little light, and where semi-darkness prevails, they will bite at all times. The baits

for bream are sand-eels—which are best of all—pieces of pilchard or herring, mussels, or ragworms. Mr. Wilcocks particularly recommends the soft part of a limpet. In cutting this bait, a small portion of the hard part is retained, through which the point of the hook is put to keep the bait in position. The hook should be any size between No. 12 and No. 15, according to the bait used, and the run of the fish. Ground-bait is very desirable, placed in a net and sunk, as already described. Pilchard guts are best for this purpose, but, failing these, other mixtures may be tried. The young of bream are called chads, and, during the summer months, are taken in large numbers with the rod and line from piers, in harbours, and off the coasts of Devon and Cornwall. The best tackle is the paternoster; the best baits, ragworms and pilchard guts. The ground-bait net should always be used. The bream feeds at various depths. The bottom should be tried first, then mid-water, and even nearer still to the surface; but for this the paternoster is no use, unless a large float is put on the line just above the gut length, and the tackle allowed to be carried out by the tide. Care should be taken that the net is at the same depth as the hooks, and that the ground-bait is washed from it to the hooks. Most bream are caught during the summer months.

The Brill.—This well-known flat fish is very rarely taken by the amateur sea fisherman, unless he is the owner of a trawl net. They frequent banks, and will take a large variety of baits, especially sand-eels and smelts.

Chad are the young of the sea bream.

The Cod.—This most valuable food fish now and again falls a victim to the angler, more often, indeed, than is generally supposed. Only a few days back I read in a paper devoted to angling and anglers, that during the week three fine cod of eighteen, twenty, and twenty-eight pounds, were landed from the pier at Ilfracombe. The places where codfish of this size can be taken from the shore are very few and far between. For these big fish very strong tackle is generally used, but if a salmon of twenty or thirty pounds can be killed

on a single strand of gut, I do not see why anything stronger should be necessary for cod. Squid is, undoubtedly, the best bait, though pilchard, sprat, sand-eel, and herring are all good; whelks can be tried if the other baits are not obtainable. The hooks should be No. 19, or even larger, for the cod likes a good mouthful, and usually disdains anything small. Paternoster or leger tackle is as good as any, and if hand-lines are being used in very deep water, the Kentish rig, described at end of Chapter IV., of suitable strength with large hooks, answers admirably. Off the North coast of Scotland, large numbers of cod are caught on hand-lines, but in the English Channel the most the angler must expect are codlings. Still, as I have said, there are places—Ilfracombe, for instance—where a fair number of large cod are caught from the shore during the year.

The Conger is a marine eel, and the largest of its kind. It grows to an immense size, and I have heard of them being taken over a hundred pounds in weight. When at Ilfracombe, one winter, I saw the upper half of a conger brought in by two fishermen. The fish was so strong and large that they were unable to get the whole of it into their boat, and were forced to cut it in half, and let the tail portion drop back into the sea. From the weight of the portion brought in, it seemed likely that the eel would have weighed about a hundred pounds. I saw no reason to disbelieve their story, as a fish of that weight would be immensely strong. Anglers from piers and jetties rarely catch conger over six or seven pounds weight, so that the tackle required need not be extraordinarily coarse. A paternoster, or leger made of stout gimp, is advisable, and between the hooks and the main line should be a swivel (*see* page 23). It is not a bad plan to lay out a conger line when angling for other fish. Gimp cannot be knotted to an eyed hook. The best plan is to put $\frac{1}{2}$ in. of the gimp through the eye, and then lash it strongly to the shank of the hook with well-waxed thread or hemp. Conger rarely take a bait during the daytime, except in very deep water, where the light hardly penetrates. They are not often found on a sandy or muddy bottom, their home being among rocks. To get really

good takes of these eels, it is necessary to fish off a rocky coast, such as that of Cornwall or the North of Scotland. Angling in the ordinary sense of the word is out of the question, for extremely strong tackle has to be used to dislodge the fish from their strongholds, where they often manage to retire on being hooked. Stout ordinary ground-lines are used, the Kentish rig (*see* Chapter IV.) being as good as any. The hooks for this fishing must be strong in the wire, and of considerable size, not less than half as large again as the largest hook figured on page 17. On the length of snooding, between the hook and the spreader, should be one very strong brass swivel. Unless the bottom is sand, the baits are fished near, but not on, the bottom. I need hardly say that, fishing for big congers being nearly always done from a boat, a fisherman who knows the marks of the best grounds must accompany the amateur. The best sport is obtained on dark nights. Though a voracious fish, the conger is rather particular in his baits—they must be soft and fresh. Squid is probably the best, being closely followed by pilchards, sprats, herrings, and mackerel. The principal bones should be taken out of fish baits, and squid should be beaten to make it tender. A very strong gaff is necessary to land a conger, and the fish should be stunned by repeated blows on the head and near the tail with a short staff kept for the purpose. Never hold up a conger—or, indeed, any other eel—by the line. The portion of the fish which is eatable is from the neck downwards for a few inches. In the hands of a skilful cook much can be done with it, and it has been whispered that there are vendors of real turtle soup who make large purchases of sea eels.

The Dab is a small, flat fish, found in most of our harbours, estuaries, and sheltered bays, of which the bottom is sand or mud, and, indeed, on most sandy bottoms round our coasts. It is often mistaken for the flounder, but may be known by being rough on the back and clear looking. Dabs are excellent eating, especially in the spring, when they are in their best condition. The tackle to use for them is the leger; the gut may be fine, and the hook about No. 7 or No. 8.

Lugworms; peeled, unboiled shrimps; and mussels, are the best baits, and ragworms are also taken freely.

The Dogfish is the *bête noir* of the hand-line fisher. In shape it is like a small shark. It has a spine in its tail, which inflicts a nasty and sometimes a poisonous wound. It takes any bait, is absolutely worthless when caught, and no one dreams of fishing for it. Large ones drive other fish away.

Dory.—This curious-looking fish is not often taken by the angler. It is, in shape, somewhat like a flat fish set on edge, has a lantern-jawed kind of head, and is of a golden olive-brown colour. It takes a live bait, and also a spinning bait, but the latter rarely. It is never specially fished for, but when one is seen, an endeavour should be made to catch it, for it is most excellent eating. The best plan is to put any small live fish on a hook, and get it, by float-tackle or drift-line, in front of the dory, which will probably take it.

The Flounder is a flat fish, usually of small size, which is found mostly in harbours and estuaries, and sometimes pushes its way up into perfectly fresh water. Of late years a number have been placed in the Thames by the Thames Angling Preservation Society, above Teddington, where they appear to do well. Many are taken in the Canterbury Stour, where the water is not even brackish. They may be known from the dab by their smooth backs, and they lack the clear appearance of their little cousin. Leger tackle, with two or more hooks, is best suited for them, and the best baits are soft crab, ragworms, shrimps, and lugworms. The first-named is to be preferred. In fresh or brackish water they take earthworms. They are in best condition during the winter and early spring.

The Garfish, Sea Pike, Longnose, Snipe Eel, or Sea Needle, is a long, slender fish, of greenish hue, with a bill not unlike that of a snipe, along which are rows of sharp teeth. It is a deep-sea fish, but comes inshore during the summer, and is usually found with shoals of mackerel. It is taken with mackerel lines and baits. Though edible, it is not good eating. It varies in length from 18in. to 4ft., and is a fine bait for whiting.

Gurnard, or Gurnet.—There are two common varieties of this fish, the red and the grey. They may be known by their large, square-shaped heads, which are out of all proportion to their bodies, and large, spinous dorsal fins. They are very abundant round our coasts, and will take almost any bait. They are to be caught near the bottom with paternoster tackle, and also with mackerel tackle and baits. They do not run very large, and are fairly good eating. They are mostly taken when whiting fishing.

Haddock.—These fish are too well known to need description. They are plentiful off the East Coast and round Scotland, but are found on all the shores of the United Kingdom. They swim in large shoals, and are uncertain in their feeding grounds, frequently shifting their position, probably in search of food. About two or three pounds is the common weight, but they have been taken as heavy as fourteen pounds. They are fished for near the bottom with the paternoster or hand-line tackle, and mussels are the standard baits; pilchards, sprats, mackerels, and herrings are also good, and a hook baited with squid and tipped with a mussel is considered very killing.

The Hake is a voracious fish, which follows and levies toll upon shoals of pilchards and herrings. It is not often taken by the amateur fisherman, who, if he would go a "haking," must make friends with the crew of a pilchard boat, and join them on one of their expeditions, for, as the hake follows the pilchards, these two fish can be captured at the same time—while the lines are out for the one, drift nets are out for the other. Hake vary from about four to fourteen pounds in weight, and require strong tackle. The hook should be three times as large as the largest in the scale given in this book, and must be mounted on gimp, for the hake has many and sharp teeth. The fishing is nearly always done at night, and is generally unsuccessful during the day. A very heavy paternoster can be used with a rod, but one hook will be found quite sufficient. The best bait is a whole pilchard. The professional fishermen, of course, use hand-lines of various patterns, of which one is as good as the other, the chief point

being to have the right weight of lead so that the fish may see the bait. Hake feed at various depths, and if not met with near the bottom, the line should be shortened. They are very fair eating, and more generally appreciated than was the case a few years back. They visit all our coasts, but are more abundant off Devon, Cornwall, and the South-west of Ireland than elsewhere.

The Halibut is an immense, flat fish, which attains the weight of five hundred pounds. It is caught more frequently in the North than off the South coast. As a rule, it takes a large fish, which has previously been hooked, and more often than not it goes off with the fisherman's lines. Some friends of mine, fishing for cod in the North of Scotland, got hold of a halibut, which towed the boat about for an hour; but, finally, they brought him to the surface. They then tried to improve their hold by sticking the hooks of other lines into him, but his hide was too hard for that. Finally, while they were endeavouring to get a noose round him—their idea being, I suppose, to tow him ashore—the boat lurched, the line broke, and the halibut lived to fight another day. In *The Field* of July 9, 1881, was recorded the capture of a halibut weighing 2cwt. It was caught on a line set for cod, and had taken a cod weighing 2lb. If anyone is inclined to fish for these monsters, let him use strong tackle, large hooks, and a whole squid, or any good-sized fish, as bait.

Herring. — This well-known fish is not often sought after by the angler, but I mention it here because, in some places, it takes a white fly well, and affords excellent sport. In Strangford Lough, Co. Down, Ireland, many herrings are taken in this way. The same thing occurs occasionally in some of the Scotch sea lochs.

The Horse Mackerel, or Scad, is taken incidentally when angling for other fish, particularly mackerel and pollack. It is poor eating, and has two spines on the belly, near the tail, which it knows how to use to the best advantage. It is sometimes taken when angling from piers or the shore with a paternoster, but is more often caught some distance from the shore.

The Ling is an ugly, badly-proportioned fish, which, to the casual observer, has the appearance of being a cross between a cod and a conger. It will take any good-sized bait, and is by no means difficult of capture. Ling are caught on conger and cod lines, take the same baits, and are fished for in the same manner. They prefer a rocky bottom to any other, are found all round our coasts, and abound off Cornwall, the Scilly Isles, and some parts of Ireland.

Plaice.—Small specimens of this well-known flat fish are often taken by the dab or flounder fisher, but the larger fish are found at some distance from the coast. They like a sandy or muddy bottom, and the usual baits are ragworms, lugworms, or shrimps raw or boiled. I have caught several large ones when baiting with mussels. Plaice of three pounds give fine sport on light tackle. When plentiful, they are well worth fishing for. Leger tackle should be used, with No. 12 hooks.

Power, Poor Cod, Pouting, White Eyes, or Gilligant.—A small member of the cod family, only a few inches in length. It abounds off the coast of Devonshire, and large numbers are taken by persons fishing for whiting and pout. The best bait is the ragworm.

The Red Mullet, or Surmullet, is not often caught by the angler. It is found principally on the South and South-east coasts of England during the summer, and is taken on lines, in much the same places as smelts, and with the same baits. The large majority of the limited number which fall victims to hooks and lines are taken on trots, or spillers—the sea fisherman's equivalent of the poacher's night-line. I imagine that few salt-water anglers ever fish specially for red mullet, they are so rarely caught. Among the baits which they are recorded to have taken are lugworms, varm—the sea tapeworm, found in the Channel Islands by digging under rocks, close to low water mark—slips of fresh sardine or bits of squid (in the Mediterranean), a slip from the tail of a cavally (at St. Vincent, Cape de Verde), and ragworms. As red mullet are not often taken over 14in. or 15in. in length, fine gut tackle should be used, the same as I have advised for

smelt fishing. Mullet caught in nets sometimes run much larger.

The Sea Trout.—For the first time this fish is included in a work on sea fishing,* and I include it for the simple and sufficient reason that it is occasionally caught in the sea, and that sea-trout fishing in salt water is a recognised branch of angling. Naturalists and writers on angling have, from time to time, been involved in discussions as to the number of varieties of migratory trout. Personally, I incline to the view that the number of species is very limited, and that several so-called species owe their existence to careless observers, who, on seeing a sea trout differing slightly in appearance from his brothers—a difference brought about, in all probability, either by some peculiarity in his food or surroundings—at once imagine that they have found a new species. I am not sure whether such fish may even be termed new varieties, for under different circumstances they quickly lose their peculiarities, and come out ordinary sea trout. A barren hen oftentimes puts on cock's plumage, but she is none the more a new variety or new species. These remarks seem to me necessary because the reader of this book may find himself considerably puzzled by the various names given to the sea trout in different places. For the purposes of this work, I include in the term sea-trout all those trout which, like salmon, live in the sea, and only come into our rivers to deposit their eggs and increase their species.

It is while sea-trout are waiting in bays and inlets of the sea for a rise of water in the rivers to enable them to ascend to their spawning grounds, that they are to be caught by the salt-water angler. The best bait is a dead sand-eel, which may merely be dragged along, or be given a brilliant spin by being mounted on a Chapman spinner, without lead on the spike, and with rather small fans (see Fig. 26, page 28). Two triangles are sufficient—one near the shoulders of the bait, the other close to the end of its tail; but opposite to the shoulder triangle a single hook should be lashed, which is merely used to stick in the bait,

* Further information on this subject is given in "Angling for Game Fish."

so that the pull on each side is equal. The Chapman spinner (shown on page 27) frequently requires some little modification to adapt it to the shapes of various baits. The trace (*see* page 30), and also the mounting of the spinner, should be of ordinary salmon gut, and the lead should be, as a rule, light, not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. in weight. Occasionally, sea trout feed near the bottom, when heavier leads should be used. This fishing is usually done from a boat near the mouths of rivers. The bait is trailed about thirty yards or more behind, and the boat should be rowed rather quickly. Sea trouting is not at all confined to a short season, for, from early spring to late autumn, the fish are running up, or waiting to run up, rivers. In the South of England it is rather an unusual thing for sea trout to take a bait in salt water; but in the North of Scotland, and notably the Kyles of Durness and Tongue, many fish are taken this way. Sea trout are so little sought after in salt water that I am quite sure there are many bays and sea lochs, especially in the North of Scotland, which have not yet been fished, where first-rate sport may be had. As sand-eels are not easy to obtain, the angler should provide himself with some artificial baits. I have found small Devon minnows (silver, with a little transparent paint of a golden-brown colour on the back), and "halcyons," as good as any. The latter are practically Alexandra flies, fitted with a pair of fans to make them spin. As a matter of fact, sea trout will take almost anything in motion which is not too large, and glitters. In fresh water I have what may be termed the bad taste to prefer fly fishing for sea trout, to salmon or any other kind of fishing, and I incline to the opinion that, in salt water, where plentiful and on the feed, no fish afford better sport.

As sea trout and salmon do not generally ascend rivers, except in times of flood, it follows that during a long drought a large number of fish collect at the mouths of rivers, and the success of the salt-water angler is then greatest. The fish sometimes take the bait best when the water in the rivers is just beginning to rise, and they are working up close to the river's mouth.

The Skate.—The skate, with its first cousins, the thornback and homelyn, finds place among those fish which are not specially angled for, but which come to bag now and again when whiting or conger fishing. They are large, flat fish, are found on sandy and muddy bottoms, and have a liking for sand-eels, but will take most fish baits.

Smelt and Sand-Smelt.—These delicate little fish, which are found mostly in harbours and sheltered bays with sandy bottoms, are easily caught in numbers with the rod and line. I have already said all that need be said on the subject on pages 44 and 52, to which the reader is referred.

Sole.—This admirable flat fish is not often taken by the angler. It comes to hand occasionally when night fishing with the sea leger (*see* page 24) on those muddy, oozy bottoms, in which most flat fish delight. Lugworms are the best bait. Any reader of this book possessing influence, either with sea fishermen or our rulers, will do a national service if he uses that influence to prevent the taking of immature soles—a practice which is slowly destroying our sole fisheries.

Turbot.—A very limited number of my readers are likely to catch turbot. These fish are found on banks well known to the fishermen, and, when the spring trawling is over, are sought after in rather deeper water with hooks and lines. Smelts, sand-eels, herrings, and other fish baits are used, but the turbot shows a decided preference for live baits, and on this account the Dutch fishermen, who do an immense amount of turbot fishing, bait their lines with lamperns, which are very tenacious of life. The hooks for turbot should be large and strong. Turbot are not always fished for close to the bottom, though that is their general feeding-place.

Whiting.—Whiting are indescribably numerous all round our coasts, and are taken in large numbers both by anglers and professional fishermen. The general size is a pound or a little more, but in some places they reach several pounds in weight. Mr. Wilcocks says that the finest run of whiting he ever saw caught averaged not more than two pounds. They are usually found on banks of sandy mud, in from

ten to about thirty fathoms, and, like most fish, prefer shallow water in summer. Small ones are often caught off pier-heads, but the larger fish are nearly always taken in deeper water. Whiting are in the markets all through the year, but they hardly come within approachable distance of the angler until the spring. The largest and best-conditioned fish are caught in the summer and autumn. Visitors to South coast watering places, who are taken short distances out to sea by local fishermen for a few hours' hand-lining, do not often catch very many whiting, but unlimited numbers of pout and dogfish. The simple reason of this is that the fishermen do not, as a rule, take their customers to the best whiting grounds, which are further out. A stranger to the coast cannot find these places, as they are only discovered by accident, and are well known to the local men by certain marks, which, when found, should always be made a note of. I hardly know of a fish which repays the angler more for using fine tackle than whiting, a fact which professional fishermen appear to be gradually finding out, as many of them now use hooks mounted on gut. As to tackle, the great thing being to get the bait to the bottom, and keep it there, it is obvious that many kinds may be, and are, used. The best for the angler is, undoubtedly, the paternoster; and only when the depth of water is considerable, and the tide so strong that a lead of over $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. becomes essential, should the rod and paternoster be dispensed with in favour of hand-lines. Of these, the best is the Kentish Rig, illustrated in Chapter IV. The paternoster should be of moderately stout gut, and the hooks No. 9 or No. 10, the lowest one placed 6in. above the lead, and two others at distances of 2ft. If hand-lines are necessary, the hooks should be mounted on at least 2ft. of gut. The ground-bait net should always be used (*see* page 45). Most commonly the boat is moored; but sometimes it is allowed to drift with the tide, fish being picked up here and there. In hand-line fishing, the lead is dropped to the bottom, and then raised 2ft. if the boat is moored, 3ft. if drifting, so that the baits do not touch the bottom. They should not do this in any case, and, the snooding being 2ft.

to 3ft. long, they are only kept from doing so, when the boat is moored, by the run of the tide. With paternoster tackle the lead, of course, rests on the ground. The best baits are pilchards or their guts, large mussels, herrings, squid, and lugworms. Pilchards and herrings have to be scaled, split down the middle, boned, and the sides cut into short strips, half silver and half blue—*i.e.*, half back and half belly. The size of the hook sufficiently determines the size of the bait. Whiting often afford very good sport at night, and bite particularly well in the early morning.

The Whiting Pout, or Rock Whiting.—If this fish became exterminated, of which there seems no probability, the fishermen of our South Coast watering-places, who make a living by taking excursionists out whiting (?) fishing, would quickly lose their business, for whiting pout and dogfish innumerable are the fish they land for their customers. The pout is a small variety of whiting, which is inferior in many respects, particularly in size and edible qualities, to the silver whiting. It is found over or near rocks not far from the coast, and small ones are caught from pier-heads and in harbours. The tackle, and method of using it, for pout is exactly the same as for the silver whiting; but the hooks (No. 7 or No. 8) and baits should be smaller. Ragworms and small mussels are both good baits; but the pout will take many others, including those named for silver whiting. If nothing better can be obtained, cockles, or the soft part of limpets, may be tried. Many anglers think it an additional attraction to keep raising and lowering the paternoster or hand-line about a foot, the idea being that the movement attracts the fish. A netful of crushed crabs, mussels, and pilchard offal, is far more attractive.

The Wrasse, or Rockfish.—A very beautiful, but very worthless, fish. It abounds all round our coasts, and is easily taken on the paternoster. The hook should be No. 10, or smaller; and for bait, soft crab, mussels, lugworms or ragworms. There are several varieties of rockfish, some more beautiful than others. I have frequently caught them when

pout-fishing; and they are usually to be had from pier-heads, and even in harbours, if there are a few rocks scattered about the foundation of the jetty. Wrasse are not often specially fished for.

With these few remarks on wrasse my task comes to an end. It would not have been a difficult matter to fill twice this number of pages with lengthy discourses on angling; but while knowingly omitting no fact likely to be of use to my readers, I have throughout allowed the spirit of condensation to guide my pen. I venture to hope that the information given is not less than if I had doubled the length of the book.



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ERRATA.

- Div. I.*, page 31, last line. For "rudd," read "roach."
 " " 32, first line. For "roach," read "rudd."

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